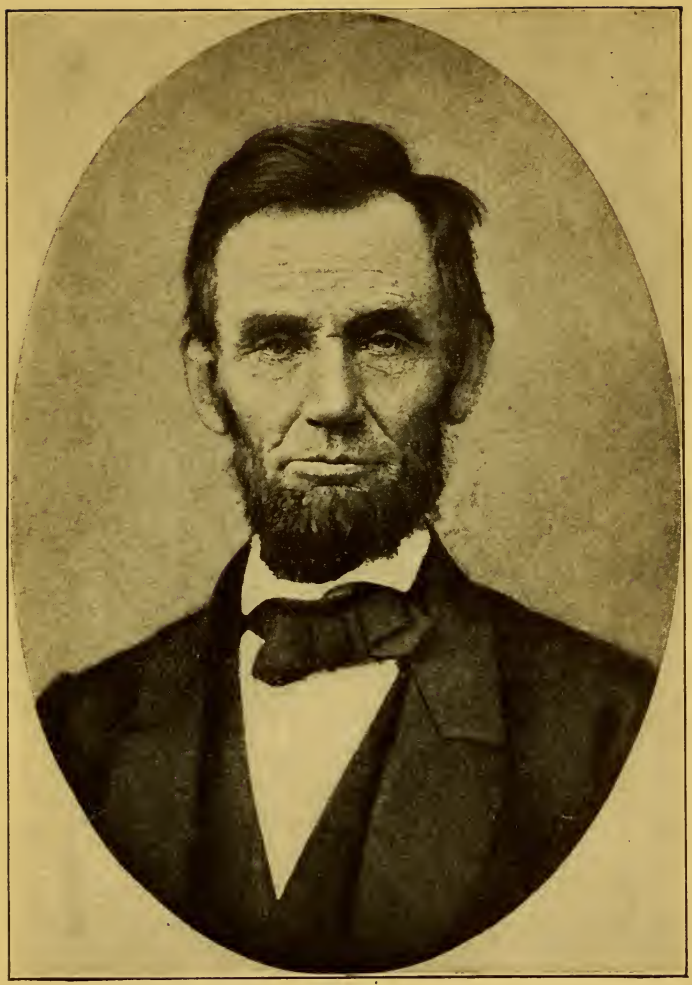

Abraham Lincoln.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

# WHY LINCOLN LAUGHED

By
RUSSELL H. CONWELL
*Author of*
"ACRES OF DIAMONDS"

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WHY LINCOLN LAUGHED

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# FOREWORD

ABRAHAM LINCOLN wrote to his law partner, William Henry Herndon, that "the physical side of Niagara Falls is really a very small part of that world's wonder. Its power to excite reflection and emotion is its great charm." That statement might fittingly be applied to Lincoln himself. One who lived in his time, and who has read the thousand books they say have been written about him in the half century since his death, may still be dissatisfied with every description of his personality and with every analysis of his character. He was human, and yet in some mysterious degree superhuman. Nothing in philosophy, magic, superstition, or religion furnishes a satisfactory explanation to the thoughtful devotee for the inspiration he gave out or for the transfiguring glow

which at times seemed to illumine his homely frame and awkward gestures.

The libraries are stocked with books about Lincoln, written by historians, poets, statesmen, relatives, and political associates. Why cumber the shelf with another sketch?

The answer to that reasonable question is in the expressed hope that great thinkers and sincere humanitarians may not give up the task of attempting to set before the people the true Lincoln. One turns away from every volume, saying, "I am not yet acquainted with that great man." Hence, books like this simple tale may help to keep the attention of readers and writers upon this powerful character until at last some clear and satisfactory portrayal may be had by the interested readers among all nations.

Neither bronze nor canvas nor marble can give the true image. Perhaps the more exact the portrait or statue in respect to his physical appearance the less it will

exhibit the real personality. All pictures of Abraham Lincoln fail to represent the man as he was. The appearance and the reality are at irreconcilable variance.

Heredity may be a large factor in the making of some great men, and education may be the chief cause for the influence of other great men. But there are only a few great characters in whose lives both of those advantages are lost to sight in the view of their achievements.

Genius is often defined with complacent assurance as the ability and disposition to do hard work. That is frequently the truth; but it is not always the truth. Abraham Lincoln did much of many kinds of hard work, but that does not account for his extraordinary genius. He had the least to boast of in his family inheritance. His school education was of the most meager kind, and he had more than his share of hard luck. His most difficult task was to overcome his awkward manners and ungainly physique. His life, therefore, pre-

sents a problem worthy the attention of philanthropic scientists.

Can he be successfully imitated? Why did his laugh vibrate so far, and why was his humor so inimitable? If the suggestions made in this book will aid the investigator in finding an answer to these questions it will justify the venturesomeness of this volume in appearing upon the shelf with such a great company of the works of greater authors.

RUSSELL H. CONWELL.

PHILADELPHIA, *January, 1922.*

# WHY LINCOLN LAUGHED

# WHY LINCOLN LAUGHED

## Chapter I: When Lincoln Was Laughed At

LINCOLN loved laughter; he loved to laugh himself and he liked to hear others laugh. All who knew him, all who have written of him, from John Hay, years ago, to Harvey O'Higgins in his recent work, tell how, in the darkest moments our country has ever known, Lincoln would find time to illustrate his arguments and make his points by narrating some amusing story. His humor never failed him, and through its help he was able to bear his great burden.

I first met Lincoln at the White House

during the Civil War. To-day it seems almost impossible that I shook his hand, heard his voice, and watched him as he laughed at one of his own stories and at the writings of Artemus Ward, of which he was so fond. Yet, as I remember it, I did not feel at that time that I was in the presence of a personality so extraordinary that it would fascinate men for centuries to come. I was a young man, and it was war time; perhaps that is the reason. On the contrary, he seemed a very simple man, as all great men are—I might almost say ordinary, throwing his long leg over the arm of the chair and using such commonplace, homely language. Indeed, it was hard to be awed in the presence of Lincoln; he seemed so approachable, so human, simple, and genial.

Did he use his humor to disarm opposition, to gain good will, or to throw a mantle around his own melancholy thoughts? Did he believe, as Mark Twain said, that "Everything human is

pathetic; the secret source of humor is not joy, but sorrow?" I am sure I cannot say. I only know that humor to Lincoln seemed to be a safety valve without which he would have collapsed under the crushing burden which he carried during the Civil War.

Until he was twenty-four and was admitted to the bar, he was a quiet, serious, brooding young fellow, but apparently he discovered the effectiveness of humor, for he began using it when he was arguing before the court. Some of his contemporaries say that he was humorous in the early part of his life, but that, as time went on and he gained confidence through success, he used humor less and less in his public utterances. This is partly true, for there is no trace of humor in his presidential addresses. But that he was humorous in his daily life and that he continued to read and laugh over the many jokes he read is too obvious to deny. You cannot think of Lincoln without think-

ing at the same time of that very American trait which he possessed and which seems to spring from and within the soil of the land—homely humor.

One day when I was at the White House in conversation with Lincoln a man bustled in self-importantly and whispered something to him. As the man left the room Lincoln turned to me and smiled.

"He tells me that twelve thousand of Lee's soldiers have just been captured," Lincoln said. "But that doesn't mean anything; he's the biggest liar in Washington. You can't believe a word he says. He reminds me of an old fisherman I used to know who got such a reputation for stretching the truth that he bought a pair of scales and insisted on weighing every fish in the presence of witnesses.

"One day a baby was born next door, and the doctor borrowed the fisherman's scales to weigh the baby. It weighed forty-seven pounds."

Lincoln threw back his head and

laughed; so did I. It was a good story. Now what do you think of this? Only recently I picked up a newspaper and read that same Lincoln anecdote, and it was headed, "A New Story."

It was in connection with a death sentence that I first went to call upon President Lincoln. This was in December, 1864. I was a captain then in a Massachusetts regiment brigaded with other regiments for the work of the North Carolina coast defense, under command of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler. A young soldier and boyhood playmate of mine from Vermont had been sentenced by court martial to be shot for sending communications to the enemy. What had actually happened was this. The fighting at that time in our part of the country was desultory—a matter of skirmishes only. As must inevitably happen, even between hostile bodies of men speaking the same language, a certain amount of "fraternizing" (although that word was not used then) went on between

the outposts and pickets of the opposing forces. In some cases the pickets faced one another on opposite sides of a narrow stream. Often this would continue for days or weeks, the same men on the same posts, and something very like friendship —the friendship of respectful enemies— would spring up between individuals in the two camps. They would sometimes go so far as to exchange little delicacies, tobacco and the like, across the line, No Man's Land, as it was called in the last war. In some places the practice actually sprang up of whittling little toy boats and sailing them across a stream, carrying a tiny freight. This act was usually reciprocated to the best of his pitiful ability by Johnny Reb on the opposite bank.

The custom served to while away the tedious hours of picket duty, and it is doubtful if any of these young fellows thought of their acts as constituting a serious military offense. But such in fact

it was; and when my young friend was caught red-handed in the act of sending a Northern newspaper into the Rebel lines he was straightway brought to trial on the terrible charge of corresponding with the enemy. He was found guilty and sentenced to be shot.

When the time for the execution of this sentence had nearly arrived I determined, as a last resort, to go and lay the case before the President in person, for it was evident, from the way matters had gone, that no mercy could be hoped for from any lesser tribunal. Fortunately, I was able to secure a few days' leave of absence. I made the trip up to Hampton Roads by way of the old Dismal Swamp Canal. Hampton Roads was by this time under undisputed control of the Union forces, naval and military, and Fortress Monroe was, in fact, General Butler's headquarters.

From this point it was a simple, if somewhat tedious, matter to get to Washington. But for one young officer the trip went all

too quickly. The nearer loomed the nation's capital and the culmination of his momentous errand the more he became amazed at his own temerity, and it required the constant thought of a gray-haired mother, soon to be broken hearted by sorrow and disgrace, to hold him steadfast to his purpose.

I had seen Lincoln only once in my life, and that was merely as one of the audience in Cooper Union, in New York, when he delivered his great speech on abolition. That had taken place on February 17, 1860, nearly five years before—long enough to make many changes in men and nations—yet the thought of that tall, awkward orator with his total lack of sophistication and his great wealth of human sympathy did much to hearten me for the coming interview. Unconsciously, as the miles jolted past in my journey to Washington, my mind slipped back over those five tremendous years and I seemed to live again the events, half pitiful, but wholly amaz-

ing, of that great meeting in the great auditorium of old Cooper Union.

At that time I was a school-teacher from the Hampshire highlands of the Berkshire Hills, and a neighbor of William Cullen Bryant. Through his kindness, my brother, who was also a teacher, and myself received an invitation to hear this speech by a then little-known lawyer from the West. We were told at the hotel that the Cooper Union lectures were usually discussions on matters of practical education, and we therefore used our tickets of admission more out of deference to Mr. Bryant for his kindness than from any interest in the debate.

When we approached the entrance to the building, however, we were soon aware that something unusual was about to happen. On the corner of the street near by we were accosted by a crowd of young roughs who demanded of us whether or not we were "nigger men." We thought that the roughs meant to ask if we were

black men, and answered decidedly, "No!" What the mob meant to ask was, were we in favor of freeing the negroes. Acting, therefore, upon the innocent answer, they thrust into our hands two dry onions, with the withered tops still adhering to the bulbs, while the ragged crowd yelled, "Keep 'em under yer jacket and when yer hear the five whistles throw them at the feller speakin'."

My brother and I took the onions, unconscious of the meaning of such strange missiles, and entered the hall with the crowd. There was great excitement, and yet we could not understand why, for no one seemed to know even the name of the speaker.

"Who is going to speak?" was the question asked all round us, which we asked also, although we had heard the unfamiliar name of Lincoln.

In one part of the hall we heard several vociferous answers: "Beecher! Beecher!" and some of the crowd seemed satisfied

that the great preacher was to be the orator of the evening. Two burly policemen pushed into the corner from which the noisiest tumult came, and we began to surmise that those onions were "concealed weapons" and that the best policy was to be sure to keep them concealed. Many descriptions of that audience have been given by men from various viewpoints, but few have emphasized the important fact that when the people entered the hall the large majority were bitterly opposed to the abolitionists' cause. One-third of the audience was seemingly intent on mobbing the speaker, for some of the men carried missiles more offensive than onions.

Mark Twain sagaciously wrote that the trouble with old men's memories is that they remember so many things "that ain't so." That warning may often be useful, even to those who are the most confident that their memories are infallible, but I should like to say, and quite modestly, that I still have a clear vision

of that startling occasion and can testify to what I saw, heard, and felt in that hall on that memorable evening.

I had previously read and studied the great models of eloquence, and was then in New York, using my carefully hoarded pennies to hear Henry Ward Beecher, Dr. R. S. Stone, Doctor Storrs, Doctor Bellows, Archbishop McCloskey, and other orators of current fame. I had studied much for the purpose of teaching my classes, from the great models, from Cicero to Daniel Webster, and I had found my ideal in Edward Everett. But those two hours in Cooper Union; like a sudden cyclone, were destined to shatter all my carefully built theories. After nearly sixty-two years of bewilderment I am still asking, "What was it that made that speech on that night an event of such world-wide importance?" It was not the physical man; it was not in what he said. Let us with open judgment meditate on the facts.

The persons in the audience, and their city, as well, were antagonistic to Lincoln's party associates. The negro-haters had seemingly pre-empted the hall. Stories of negro brutality had been published in the papers of that week. Lincoln was regarded as an adventurer from the "wild and woolly West." He was expected to be an extremist. He was crude, unpolished, having no reputation in the East as a scholar. He was not an orator and had the reputation of being only a homely teller of grocery-store yarns. His voice was of a poor quality, grinding the ears sharply. He seemed to be a ludicrous scarecrow rival of the great gentleman, scholar, and statesman, William H. Seward. Even Lincoln's own party in New York City bowed religiously to Seward, the idol of New York State. The Quakers and the adherents of the pro-slavery party were conscientiously opposed to war, especially against a civil war.

We now know that Lincoln's speech had

been written in Illinois. As I saw him, on its delivery, he himself was trebly chained to his manuscript, by his own modest timidity, by the dictation of his party managers, and by the fact that when he spoke his written speech was already set up in type for the next morning's papers.

In the chair on the platform as presiding officer sat the venerable poet of the New England mountains and the writer of keen political editorials. The minds of the intelligent auditors began to repeat "Thanatopsis" or "The Fringed Gentian" as soon as they saw the noble old man. His culture, age, reputation, dignified bearing, and faultless attire seemed in disparaging contrast to the appearance of the young visitor beside him. In addition to Mr. Bryant, the stage setting included, on the other side of the slender guest, a very ponderous fat man, whose proportions, in their contrasting effect upon the speaker of the evening, made his thin form so tall as to bring to mind Lincoln's story of the

man "so tall they laid him out in a rope walk."

Lincoln himself was seated in a half-round armchair. His awkward legs were tied in a kind of a knot in the rungs of the chair. His tall hat, with his manuscript in it, was near him on the floor. The black fur of the hat was rubbed into rough streaks. One of his trousers legs was caught on the back of his boot. His coat was too large. His head was bowed and he looked down at the floor without lifting his eyes.

Somebody whispered in one of the back seats, "Let's go home," and was answered, "No, not yet; there'll be fun here soon!"

The entrance of the stranger speaker was greeted with neither decided nor hearty applause. In fact, the greeting for Mr. Bryant was far more enthusiastic. But there was a chilling formality in the effect of the whole of Mr. Bryant's introduction. Nothing worth hearing was expected of the lank and uncouth stranger

—that was the impression made upon me. And when young Lincoln made an awkward gesture in trying to bow his thanks to Mr. Bryant, the audience began to smirk and giggle. Lincoln was evidently disturbed and felt painfully out of place. He seemed to be fearfully lacking in self-control and appeared to feel that he had made a ridiculous mistake in accepting such an invitation to such a place. One singular proof of Lincoln's nervousness was in the fact that he had forgotten to take from the top of his ear a long, black lead pencil, which occasionally threatened to shoot out at the audience.

When I mentioned the pencil to Lincoln nearly five years later, he said that his absent-mindedness on that occasion recalled to him the story of an old Englishman who was so absent-minded that when he went to bed he put his clothes carefully into the bed and threw himself over the back of his chair.

When Mr. Bryant's introduction was

concluded, Lincoln hesitated. He attempted to rise, and caught the toe of his boot under the rung of his chair. He ran his long fingers through his hair, which left one long tuft sticking up from the back of his head like an Indian's feather. He looked pale, and he unrolled his manuscript with trembling fingers. He began to read in a low, hollow voice that trembled from uncertainty and nervousness—so low, in fact, that the crowd at the rear of the hall could not hear, and shouted: "Louder! Louder!"

At this the speaker's voice became a little stronger, and with this added strength came added confidence, so much so that there came suddenly a slight climax. The speaker looked up from his manuscript as though to note the effect of his words. But his eyes quickly dropped again to the paper in his shaking hands. The applause was fitful, and from the corner where the hoodlums were assembled came several distinct hisses.

When the audience finally began to make out what he was endeavoring to say about the signers of the Declaration of Independence and their opposition to the extension of human slavery, there was for a time respectful silence.

How long the painful recital might have been permitted to continue no one can tell. The crowd, even that portion inclined to favor Lincoln's views, was growing increasingly restless. Half an hour had passed. The ordeal could not go on much longer. Suddenly a leaf from the speaker's manuscript accidentally and without his knowledge dropped to the floor. The moment he missed the leaf he turned a little paler than he had been and hesitated awkwardly.

For a moment the audience felt keenly the embarrassment of the situation. But the pause was brief. With an honest gesture of impatience and a movement forward as if he were about to leap into the audience, Lincoln lifted his voice,

swung out his long arms, and, as my brother remarked, "let himself go."

Disregarding his written speech,[1] Lincoln launched into that part of the subject that was nearest his heart. In a voice that no longer was hollow or sepulchral, but rich and ringing, he denounced the institution of slavery. Yet he spoke of the South in the most affectionate terms. He said he loved the South, since "he was born there," but that he loved the Union more for what it had done united and what it was destined still to do united.

Wave after wave of telling eloquence rolled forth from this uncouth, gaunt figure and literally dashed itself against

[1] Charles Sumner said, in one of his great speeches in Fanueil Hall, Boston, that if the speech Lincoln carefully wrote had not been circulated, or if he had actually delivered the speech which he wrote, the change of direction in the car of progress would have led to delays and disasters "out beyond the limits of human calculation." Many of the great historians like Hay, Brockett, McClure, and Miss Tarbell have overlooked or thrown aside the most wonderful portion of that speech where the disgusted orator lost his place because of a misplaced leaf of the manuscript from which he was reading.

the hard, resisting minds of that prejudiced audience. Already the feeble wits were engulfed in the overwhelming verbal torrents that came now like avalanches, and little by little even the most biased minds began to relent under the mystic persuasiveness of his voice and the unanswerableness of his logic, until nearly everybody in that throbbing and excited audience was convinced that slavery was one of the blackest crimes of which man could be found guilty. And even before the last words of his impassioned eloquence had passed his lips the audience was on its feet, and those most bitterly opposed to him politically arose too and applauded him.

Naturally, no verbatim report of that address can be recalled after sixty years. But the impression it made almost surpasses belief when told to those who were not there. There is no clearer descriptive term which could be applied to the speaker than to state, as some did, that "the orator

was transfigured." No one thought of his ill-fitting new suit, of his old hat, of his protruding wrists or the disheveled hair, of his long legs, his bony face, or the one-sided necktie. The natural Abraham Lincoln had disappeared and an angel spake in his place. Nothing but language which seems extravagant will tell the accurate truth.

All manner of theories were advanced by those who heard the speech to account for the gigantic mystery of eloquent power which he exhibited. One said it was mesmerism; another that it was magnetism; while the superstitious said there was "a distinct halo about his head" at one place in the speech. No analysis of the speech as he wrote it, nor any recollection of the words, shows anything remarkable in language, figures, or ideas. The subtle, magnetic, spiritual force which emanated from that inspired speaker revealed to his audience an altogether different man from the one who began to read a different speech.

He did not approach the delicate sweetness of Mr. Bryant's words of introduction, or reach the imaginative scenes and noble company which characterized Beecher's addresses. Lincoln was less cutting than Wendell Phillips and had no definite style like Everett or Gough. As an orator he imitated no one, and surely no one could imitate him. Of the four Ohio voters who changed their votes in the Republican convention and made Lincoln's nomination sure, two heard that Cooper Union speech and claimed sturdily that they knew "old Abe" was right, but could not tell why.

Thus it appears throughout Lincoln's public life. He was larger than his task, wider than his party, ahead of his time as an inspired prophet, and he seemed to be a spiritual force without material limitations. He began to grow at his death, and is conquering now in lands he never saw and rules over nations which cannot pronounce his name. Such individual influ-

ence is next to the divine, and is of the same nature. Can we find a measure for such a man?

These facts and these thoughts were in my mind as I traveled to Washington to intercede for my condemned comrade. Such was the man to whom I was going. But it was to Lincoln the commander-in-chief, and not to Lincoln the impassioned orator, that I must make my plea.

## Chapter II: President and Pilgrim

THE reader will not be surprised to learn that getting into the presence of the President was no laughing matter, and that his own habit of occasionally using laughter during business hours did not always descend to those under him in the government.

I arrived in Washington early on a crisp December morning, just a few days before Christmas. I went straightway to the old Ebbit House, which was then the fashionable gathering place for military people stationed or sojourning in the capital. The contrast between "desk officers" and officers in the field was even greater then than in more recent days, because if the former were less smart in appearance than the modern "citified" officer, the latter were, as a rule, vastly more disheveled

and disreputable in appearance than one would find in any army of to-day on campaign. There were good reasons for this, of course, but they did not greatly help to increase the confidence of a decidedly "seedy"-looking young officer fresh from the swamps and thickets of North Carolina. I was glad to get away from the environs of the Ebbit House after a brief but very earnest effort to "spruce up."

When the time at last arrived that the ordeal was directly ahead, I plucked up courage and walked up the footpath to the White House with a tolerably certain step. Even at the height of the war President Lincoln did not surround himself by the barriers which later Executives have found necessary. One simply went to the White House, stated his business, and waited his turn for an interview.

Once inside that building, however, my earlier timidity returned tenfold. I had agreed that morning with the local correspondent of the New York *Tribune* to get

all the material I could from Lincoln for an interview for his paper. I trembled as with a chill when I told the doorkeeper that I wished to see the President, and when the official coldly ordered me to "come in and sit over there, in that row," I began to doubt whether I was to be arrested for intrusion. The anteroom was crowded with important-looking people, all waiting for an interview with Lincoln. I wondered if I would ever get within sight of his door.

Presently, however, the President's personal secretary entered the room, and passing along the line of visitors with a notebook, asked each to state his business with the President. I showed my pass and in a few words explained my errand, even mustering up courage to emphasize the urgency of the case.

The secretary disappeared, and there was an awkward half hour of waiting. Finally he returned by a side door and, calling out my name, directed me in an

official way to "come in at once" ahead of all the others. When I had passed into the vestibule the secretary shut the reception-room door behind us and, pointing to a door at the other side of the room, said, hastily: "That is the President's door. Go over, rap on the door, and walk right in." He then hurried out at a side door and left me alone.

Thus abandoned, I felt faint with terror, embarrassment, and conflicting decisions. It was a most painful ordeal to be left to go in alone to meet the august head of the nation—to rush alone into the privacy of the commander-in-chief of all the loyal armies of the Union. It was an especially trying period of the war which we had just passed through. Sherman's march to the sea was still in progress. The President had not yet received the historic telegram in which General Sherman offered him the city of Savannah as a Christmas gift, but he was well aware of the thorough devastation which that army left in its

wake; and while he understood its necessity, the thought filled him with deepest gloom. Hood's Confederate army, which threatened for a time to repeat the successes of General Kirby Smith, had been crushed in Tennessee, but only after a period of suspense which stretched the nerves of all in administration circles to within a degree of the breaking point. In addition to this the voices of the "defeatists"—"Copperheads," they were called then—were heard far and wide in the land, ranting and howling their demand for a peace which would have been premature and inconclusive. The cares and sorrows of the President had hardly been more severe during the most critical days of the war than they were in December, 1864—it was the dark just before the dawn.

Whether to turn and run for the street, to stand still, or to force myself to rap on that awful door was a question filling my soul with frightful emotions. I rubbed my head and walked several times across

the vestibule to regain possession of my normal faculties. No one who has not been placed in such a startling situation can begin to realize what a stage-struck heartache afflicted me. I had been under fire and heard the shells crack and the bullets sing, but none of those experiences, so awful to a green soldier, had so filled my being with a desire to run away. But I recalled the fact that the President had the reputation of being a plain man to whom any citizen could speak on the street and was kind-hearted to an almost feminine degree, so I wiped my brow and at last drove myself over to the door. There, with the desperation such as the suicide must feel as he leaps from the cliff, I rapped hesitatingly on the door.

Instantly a strong voice from inside shouted, "Come in and sit down." It was a command rather than an invitation.

I turned the knob weakly and entered, almost on tiptoe. There at the side of a long table sat the same lank individual

who spoke at the Cooper Union four years before. The pallor of his face and the prominence of the cheek bones seemed even more striking in contrast with the full beard than when he was clean shaven. But his hair was as sadly disturbed and his clothing had the same lack of style and fitness. An old gray shawl had fallen across one corner of the table, where also lay numerous rolls of papers. The President did not look up when I stepped in and hesitatingly sat down in the chair nearest the door.

That close application to the task before him was a characteristic of Lincoln which has not been emphasized by his biographers as it could and should have been. To quote his own words, whenever he read a book he "exhausted it." It seems to be the one great trait of character which lifted him above the common clay from which he came. Lincoln had no inheritance worth recording. He once wrote to his partner that what little talent, money, and

learning he had was "purloined or picked up."

Surely, never among the surprises which one finds in the history of this nation is there one more unaccountable than the career of Abraham Lincoln. How he first formed the habit, or where he adopted his method of mental concentration, has not been revealed. The ability to focus one's whole mind on a single idea is not such an unattainable achievement. Perhaps it has no connection with genius in the true sense, but it serves to concentrate all the rays of mental light and power until they penetrate the hardest substances and ignite into explosion the latent power hitherto unguessed.

There seems to be no other great quality in Lincoln's mentality, but that one may account for all in him that was above the normal. He could manage flatboats, split rails, endure fatigue, tell homely stories for illustration, and wait with unshakable patience, but his greatest achievement

was in the power he gained to think hard and long with his mind immovably concentrated upon a difficult problem.

That morning while I sat trembling by the door, the President read on with undisturbed attention the manuscript before him, occasionally making notes on the margin of the paper. He did not lift his eyes or move in his seat, and it was not until he had read carefully the last sentence, had scribbled his name or initials at the bottom of the last page, and had tied the paper carefully with a string, that he looked up at his visitor. Then a smile came over the worn face, and as he pulled himself into his spring-backed chair he called out, cheerfully:

"Come over to the table, young man. Glad to see you. But remember that I am a very busy man and have no time to spare; so tell me in the fewest words what it is you want."

I took the seat at the table to which the President pointed, pulled out a copy of

the record of the case, and read the soldier's name. The President stopped me almost sharply, saying:

"Oh, you don't need to read more about that case. Mr. Stanton and I talked over that report carefully last week!"

Already my nervousness had been dispelled as if by magic. Indeed, the President's cordial, familiar manner and apparent good will gave me the courage to remark that it was "almost time for that order to be carried out." For a moment Lincoln seemed to be offended by the hasty remark. Flinging himself back in his chair with an impatient gesture, he said:

"You can go down to the Ebbit House *now* and write to that soldier's mother in Vermont and tell her the President told you that he never did sign an order to shoot a boy under twenty years of age and *that he never will!*"

As he uttered the last words of that remark he swung his long arms swiftly over his head and struck the table violently

with his fist. At that moment Lincoln's boy, "Tad," then eleven years old, slipped off a stool in the farther corner of the room, where he had been silently at play, and Lincoln turned anxiously around at the sound of his fall. Seeing that the little boy was unhurt, the President called:

"Come here, Tad, I wish to introduce you to this soldier!"

So quickly and easily had the purpose of my interview been accomplished that for a moment it left me dazed. But Lincoln wanted no thanks. What was done was done, and the incident was closed. The name of my young soldier friend was not mentioned again in the course of what turned out to be a long and wonderful chat about subjects as alien to discipline as music, education, and the cultivation and use of humor. The President had a purpose in detaining me, though at first I did not perceive what this was.

Without appearing in the least to see anything incongruous in the act—while a

score of important callers waited in the anteroom—Lincoln threw his long arm about the little boy and plunged into a conversation of the most personal sort. He told me it was his ambition to carry on a farm, with Tad for a partner. He said that he had bought a farm at New Salem, Illinois, where he used to dig potatoes at twenty-five cents a day, and that Tad and he were to have mule teams and raise corn and onions. Then he smiled as he remarked, "Mrs. Lincoln does not know anything about the plan for the onions."

He said farming was, after all, the best occupation on earth. He then told a number of incidents in his own life to illustrate, as he said, "How little I know about farming!" The incidents were droll and full of wise suggestions, which wholly disarmed me until I laughed without reserve.

Lincoln told of a visit Horace Greeley had made to the White House a few weeks before to enlighten the President on "What

I know about farming." Lincoln said he half believed the story about Greeley wherein it was said that he (Greeley) planted a long row of beans, and when in the process of first growth the beans were pushed bodily out of the ground, Greeley concluded that the beans "had made a blunder," and, pulling up each bean, he carefully turned it over with the roots sticking out in the air.

The President then asked me if I was a farmer's boy, and when I answered that I was brought up on a farm in the Berkshire Hills he burst out into strong laughter and said, "I hear that you have to sharpen the noses of the sheep up there to get them down to the grass between the rocks." Then the President, as his mind was led away from the awful cares of state, turned to a small side table and picked up a much-worn copy of the News Stand Edition of the *Life and Sayings of Artemus Ward.* Both Ward and Lincoln were skilled story-tellers, and they were alike in their avoid-

ance of vulgar or low yarns. Lincoln was credited with thousands of yarns he never heard, and with thousands to which he would not have listened without giving a rebuke. Many of those at which he revolted have been continued in print under his name. But Ward's speech concerning his visit to the President among the office-seeking crowd was to Lincoln's mind "a masterpiece of pure fun."

As we sat there Lincoln opened Artemus Ward's book and read several things from it. Then closing it, he said, "Ward rests me more than any living man."

## Chapter III: Lincoln Reads Artemus Ward Aloud

THIS generation, whose taste in humor has naturally changed from that of Civil War times, is not very familiar with the stories of Artemus Ward. It will be well for the reader to bear this in mind in the pages that follow.

One of the two stories Lincoln read by way of relaxation, as I have told in the preceding chapter, concerned the President himself. Here it is:

### HOW OLD ABE RECEIVED THE NEWS OF HIS NOMINATION

There are several reports afloat as to how "Honest Old Abe" received the news of his nomination, none of which are correct. We give the correct report.

## Lincoln Reads Artemus Ward Aloud

The Official Committee arrived in Springfield at dewy eve, and went to Honest Old Abe's house. Honest Old Abe was not in. Mrs. Honest Old Abe said Honest Old Abe was out in the woods splitting rails. So the Official Committee went out into the woods, where, sure enough, they found Honest Old Abe splitting rails with his two boys. It was a grand, a magnificent spectacle. There stood Honest Old Abe in his shirt-sleeves, a pair of leather home-made suspenders holding up a pair of home-made pantaloons, the seat of which was neatly patched with substantial cloth of a different color. "Mr. Lincoln, Sir, you've been nominated, Sir, for the highest office, Sir—" "Oh, don't bother me," said Honest Old Abe; "I took a *stent* this mornin' to split three million rails afore night, and I don't want to be pestered with no stuff about no Conventions till I get my stent done. I've only got two hundred thousand rails to split before sundown. I kin do it if you'll let me alone." And the great man

went right on splitting rails, paying no attention to the Committee whatever. The Committee were lost in admiration for a few moments, when they recovered, and asked one of Honest Old Abe's boys whose boy he was? "I'm my parent's boy," shouted the urchin, which burst of wit so convulsed the Committee that they came very near "gin'in eout" completely. In a few moments Honest Ole Abe finished his task, and received the news with perfect self-possession. He then asked them up to the house, where he received them cordially. He said he split three million rails every day, although he was in very poor health. Mr. Lincoln is a jovial man, and has a keen sense of the ludicrous. During the evening he asked Mr. Evarts, of New York, "why Chicago was like a hen crossing the street?" Mr. Evarts gave it up. "Because," said Mr. Lincoln, "Old Grimes is dead, that good old man!" This exceedingly humorous thing created the most uproarious laughter.

## Lincoln Reads Artemus Ward Aloud

INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT LINCOLN

I hav no politics. Not a one. I'm not in the bizniss. If I was I spose I should holler versiffrusly in the streets at nite and go home to Betsy Jane smellin of coal ile and gin, in the mornin. I should go to the Poles arly. I should stay there all day. I should see to it that my nabers was thar. I should git carriges to take the kripples, the infirm, and the indignant thar. I should be on guard agin frauds and sich. I should be on the look out for the infamus lise of the enemy, got up jest be4 elecshun for perlitical effeck. When all was over and my candy-date was elected, I should move heving & erth—so to speak—until I got orfice, which if I didn't git a orfice I should turn round and abooze the Administration with all my mite and maine. But I'm not in the bizniss. I'm in a far more respectful bizniss nor what pollertics is. I wouldn't giv two cents to be a Congresser. The wuss insult I ever received

was when sertin citizens of Baldinsville axed me to run fur the Legislater. Sez I, "My frends, dostest think I'd stoop to that there?" They turned as white as a sheet. I spoke in my most orfullest tones & they knowed I wasn't to be trifled with. They slunked out of site to onct.

There4, havin no politics, I made bold to visit Old Abe at his humstid in Springfield. I found the old feller in his parler, surrounded by a perfeck swarm of orfice seekers. Knowin he had been capting of a flat boat on the roarin Mississippy I thought I'd address him in sailor lingo, so sez I, "Old Abe, ahoy! Let out yer mainsuls, reef hum the forecastle & throw yer jib-poop over-board! Shiver my timbers, my harty!" [N. B. This is ginuine mariner langwidge. I know, becawz I've seen sailor plays acted out by them New York theater fellers.] Old Abe lookt up quite cross & sez, "Send in yer petition by & by. I can't possibly look at it now. Indeed, I can't. It's on-possible, sir!"

"Mr. Linkin, who do you spect I air?" sed I.

"A orfice-seeker, to be sure," sed he.

"Wall, sir," sed I, "you's never more mistaken in your life. You hain't gut a orfiss I'd take under no circumstances. I'm A. Ward. Wax figgers is my perfeshun. I'm the father of Twins, and they look like me—*both of them.* I cum to pay a friendly visit to the President eleck of the United States. If so be you wants to see me, say so, if not, say so & I'm orf like a jug handle."

"Mr. Ward, sit down. I am glad to see you, Sir."

"Repose in Abraham's Buzzum!" sed one of the orfice seekers, his idee bein to git orf a goak at my expense.

"Wall," sez I, "ef all you fellers repose in that there Buzzum thar'll be mity poor nussin for sum of you!" whereupon Old Abe buttoned his weskit clear up and blusht like a maidin of sweet 16. Jest at this pint of the conversation another

swarm of orfice-seekers arrove & cum pilin into the parler. Sum wanted post orfices, sum wanted collectorships, sum wantid furrin missions, and all wanted sumthin. I thought Old Abe would go crazy. He hadn't more than had time to shake hands with 'em, before another tremenjis crowd cum porein onto his premises. His house and dooryard was now perfeckly overflowed with orfice seekers, all clameruss for a immejit interview with Old Abe. One man from Ohio, who had about seven inches of corn whisky into him, mistook me for Old Abe and addrest me as "The Pra-hayrie Flower of the West!" Thinks I *you* want a offiss putty bad. Another man with a gold-heded cane and a red nose told Old Abe he was "a seckind Washington & the Pride of the Boundliss West."

Sez I, "Square, you wouldn't take a small post-offiss if you could git it, would you?"

Sez he, "A patrit is abuv them things, sir!"

"There's a putty big crop of patrits this season, ain't there, Squire?" sez I, when *another* crowd of offiss seekers pored in. The house, dooryard, barngs, woodshed was now all full, and when *another* crowd cum I told 'em not to go away for want of room as the hog-pen was still empty. One patrit from a small town in Michygan went up on top the house, got into the chimney and slid into the parler where Old Abe was endeverin to keep the hungry pack of orfice-seekers from chawin him up alive without benefit of clergy. The minit he reached the fireplace he jumpt up, brusht the soot out of his eyes, and yelled: "Don't make eny pintment at the Spunkville postoffiss till you've read my papers. All the respectful men in our town is signers to that there dockyment!"

"Good God!" cried Old Abe, "they cum upon me from the skize—down the chimneys, and from the bowels of the yerth!" He hadn't more'n got them words out of his delikit mouth before two fat offiss-

seekers from Winconsin, in endeverin to crawl atween his legs for the purpuss of applyin for the tollgateship at Milwawky, upsot the President eleck, & he would hev gone sprawlin into the fireplace if I hadn't caught him in these arms. But I hadn't more'n stood him up strate before another man cum crashing down the chimney, his head strikin me viliently again the inards and prostratin my voluptoous form onto the floor. "Mr. Linkin," shoutid the infatooated being, "my papers is signed by every clergyman in our town, and likewise the skoolmaster!"

Sez I, "You egrejis ass," gittin up & brushin the dust from my eyes, "I'll sign your papers with this bunch of bones, if you don't be a little more keerful how you make my bread basket a depot in the futur. How do you like that air perfumery?" sez I, shuving my fist under his nose. "Them's the kind of papers I'll giv you! Them's the papers *you* want!"

"But I workt hard for the ticket; I

toiled night and day! The patrit should be rewarded!"

"Virtoo," sed I, holdin' the infatooated man by the coat-collar, "virtoo, sir, is its own reward. Look at me!" He did look at me, and qualed be4 my gase. "The fact is," I continued, lookin' round on the hungry crowd, "there is scacely a offiss for every ile lamp carrid round durin' this campane. I wish thare was. I wish thare was furrin missions to be filled on varis lonely Islands where eprydemics rage incessantly, and if I was in Old Abe's place I'd send every mother's son of you to them. What air you here for?" I continnered, warmin up considerable, "can't you giv Abe a minit's peace? Don't you see he's worrid most to death? Go home, you miserable men, go home & till the sile! Go to peddlin tinware—go to choppin wood—go to bilin' sope—stuff sassengers —black boots—git a clerkship on sum respectable manure cart—go round as original Swiss Bell Ringers—becum 'origenal

and only' Campbell Minstrels—go to lecturin at 50 dollars a nite—imbark in the peanut bizniss—*write for the Ledger*—saw off your legs and go round givin concerts, with tuchin appeals to a charitable public, printed on your handbills—anything for a honest living, but don't come round here drivin Old Abe crazy by your outrajis cuttings up! Go home. Stand not upon the order of your goin', but go to onct! Ef in five minits from this time," sez I, pullin' out my new sixteen dollar huntin cased watch and brandishin' it before their eyes, "Ef in five minits from this time a single sole of you remains on these here premises, I'll go out to my cage near by, and let my Boy Constructor loose! & ef he gits amung you, you'll think old Solferino has cum again and no mistake!" You ought to hev seen them scamper, Mr. Fair. They run of as tho Satun hisself was arter them with a red hot ten pronged pitchfork. In five minits the premises was clear.

"How kin I ever repay you, Mr. Ward, for your kindness?" sed Old Abe, advancin and shakin me warmly by the hand. "How kin I ever repay you, sir?"

"By givin the whole country a good, sound administration. By poerin' ile upon the troubled waturs, North and South. By pursooin' a patriotic, firm, and just course, and then if any State wants to secede, let 'em Sesesh!"

"How 'bout my Cabinit, Mister Ward?" sed Abe.

"Fill it up with Showmen, sir! Showmen, is devoid of politics. They hain't got any principles. They know how to cater for the public. They know what the public wants, North & South. Showmen, sir, is honest men. Ef you doubt their literary ability, look at their posters, and see small bills! Ef you want a Cabinit as is a Cabinit fill it up with showmen, but don't call on me. The moral wax figger perfeshun mustn't be permitted to go down while there's a drop of blood in these vains!

A. Linkin, I wish you well! Ef Powers or Walcutt wus to pick out a model for a beautiful man, I scarcely think they'd sculp you; but ef you do the fair thing by your country you'll make as putty a angel as any of us! A. Linkin, use the talents which Nature has put into you judishusly and firmly, and all will be well! A. Linkin, adoo!"

He shook me cordyully by the hand—we exchanged picters, so we could gaze upon each others' liniments, when far away from one another—he at the hellum of the ship of State, and I at the hellum of the show bizniss—admittance only 15 cents.

## Chapter IV: Some Lincoln Anecdotes

LET us now get back to that room in the White House again. After Lincoln had finished reading from Ward's book we talked about the author.

The two stories long accredited to Ward at which Mr. Lincoln laughed most heartily that day included the anecdote of the gray-haired lover who hoped to win a young wife and who, when asked by a neighbor how he was progressing with his suit, answered, with enthusiasm, "All right."

When the neighbor then asked, "Has she called you 'Honey' yet?" the old man answered, "Well, not exactly that, but she called me the next thing to it. She has called me 'Old Beeswax'!"

Another story which Lincoln accredited to Ward had to do with a visit the latter

was supposed to have made in his country clothes and manners to a fashionable evening party. Ward, not wishing to show the awkwardness he felt, stepped boldly up to an aristocratic lady and said, "You are a very handsome woman!" The woman took it to be an insulting piece of rude flattery and replied, spitefully, "I wish I could say the same thing of you!" Whereupon Ward boldly remarked, "Well, you could if you were as big a liar as I am!"

Ward once stated that Lincoln told him that he was an expert at raising corn to fatten hogs, but, unfortunately for his creditors, they were his neighbor's hogs.

During this conversation the President sat leaning back in his desk chair with one long leg thrown over a corner of the Cabinet table. He had removed his right cuff —I presume to be better able to sign his name to the various documents with which the table was littered—and he did not trouble to put it on again. He wore a black frock coat very wrinkled and shiny,

and trousers of the same description. His necktie was black and one end of it was caught under the flap of his turnover collar. Yet his appearance did not give one an impression of disorder; rather he looked like a neat workingman of the better sort.

As I sat talking with the President a strong light flooded the Cabinet Room through the great south windows. Outside one could see the Potomac River sparkling in the bright winter sunshine. This strong illumination revealed the deep lines of the President's face. He looked so haggard and careworn after his long vigil (he had been at work since two o'clock in the morning) that I said:

"You are very tired. I ought not to stay here and talk to you."

"Please sit still," he replied, quickly. "I am very tired and I can get rested; and you are an excuse for not letting anybody else in until I do get rested."

So I understood the reason, or perhaps

it would be fairer to say the excuse, for granting me this remarkable privilege.

Somehow the subject of education came up, and when Lincoln asked me if I was a college man I told him I had left Yale College Law School to go to war. Then he recounted an amusing experience which he once had in New Haven. He went to the old New Haven House to spend the night, and was given a room looking out on Chapel Street and the Green. Students were seated on the rail of the fence across the street, singing. Mr. Lincoln said that all he could remember of Yale College as a result of that visit was a continual repetition in the song they were singing:

"My old horse he came from Jerusalem, came from Jerusalem, came from Jerusalem, leaning on the lamb."

He said whimsically that he thought this was a good sample of college education as he had found it. Yet the President did not belittle the advantages to be gained by a college education properly and seri-

ously applied. He said he often felt that he had missed a great deal by his failure to secure these advantages even though he thought the usual college education was inadequate and very impractical. He had found in his experience with the army that it took army officers from college just as long to learn military science as it did a young man from a farm.

Then the President asked me how I, as a poor farmer's boy, got along at Yale. I told him I taught music in Yale to earn part of my living—dug potatoes in the afternoon, and taught music in the evening. Then he got up and walked up and down the room with his hands behind him, while he gave me quite a discourse on his opinion of music, and especially of church music.

He said the inconsistency of church music was something that astonished him: that if you go to any place other than a church the music is always appropriate for the place and time. In the theater, for

example, they sing songs which have some connection with the acting. (Perhaps that example would not apply to-day.) But in church very often there did not seem to be any relation whatever between what the congregation or the choir sings and the sermon. Then he told me about some "highfalutin' songs" he had heard in church, which he said would be ridiculous if it was not in church; he was disgusted with the lack of sacred art and of appropriateness in church music. He finished by saying that he did not favor "dance music at a funeral." There is a good deal of common sense in that!

I do not now recall just how the subject was introduced, but Lincoln talked to me about dreams, and he said that while he could not see any scientific reason for believing in dreams, nevertheless that he did in a measure believe in them, although he could not explain why. He said that they had undeniably influenced him.

Then he spoke of dreams he had "since

the war came on," which had influenced him a great deal. He said, "There might not be much in dreams, but when I dream we have been defeated it puts me on my nerve to watch out and see how things are. Men may say dreams are of no account, but they are suggestive to me, and in that respect of great account."

When the President spoke of the people who were waiting to see him, I said:

"No doubt many of them, like myself, are strangers to you. How do you select those you will let in when you can't see them all?"

He replied that he decided a good deal by names, and then he told me what seemed a good point to remember, that he had trained his memory in his youth by determining to remember people's faces and names together. This he had done when he was first elected to the legislature in Illinois. He realized at once when he got into the legislature that he could not make a speech like the rest of "those fel-

lows," college people, but he could get a personal acquaintance and great influence if he would remember everybody's face and everybody's name; and so he said he had acted upon the plan of carrying a memorandum book around with him and setting down carefully the name of each man he met, and then making a little outline sketch with his pencil of some feature of the man—his ears, nose, shoulder, or something which would help him to remember.

Lincoln then told me a story about James G. Blaine when the latter was first elected to Congress. Blaine afterward repudiated this story, but it serves to illustrate Lincoln's thought none the less. He said that Blaine hired a private secretary to help him out in remembering people. His system was to have the secretary meet all those who entered the reception room and ask their names, where they lived, what families they belonged to, and all the information that could be gained

about them in a social way. Then, according to the story, the secretary ran around to the back door to Mr. Blaine's private office and gave him a full memorandum about his callers. A few minutes later, when the visitor was ushered in, the secretary told him to "walk right in to see Mr. Blaine."

He would say in the most casual manner: "Mr. Blaine is in there. You can go right in."

Mr. Blaine would get up, shake hands with the man, ask him how his relations were, how long it had been since he was in the legislature, whether his wife's brother had been successful in the West, etc., until the visitor came to be perfectly astounded.

As a result of this Mr. Blaine became very famous for his memory of names. But even if the story about the source of Blaine's "memory" is untrue, Lincoln was probably ahead of him and, indeed, of any man in this country; he could remember every person he had ever seen in

twenty years' time. That was one of the things that became evident when I asked him how he could judge the visitors. In the majority of cases he had seen the man or heard of him in some connection, perhaps years before. He also said that he judged strangers by their names because when he heard their names he would think of other people he did know by that name, and he judged they might belong to that family and have the same traits.

He admitted that he was sometimes guided by the suggestion of Artemus Ward, who told him a story of a boys' club in Boston which did not take in any members who were not Irish. A boy came along and asked to be admitted to the club, and the members asked, "Are you Irish?"

"Oh yes," replied the boy, "I am Irish."

"What is your name?"

"My name is Ikey Einstein."

Lincoln, smiling, said, "The Irish boys kicked that boy out forthwith."

He said, "Artemus Ward, when telling

me that story, confirmed me in my view that a name *does* have something to do with the man. But," Lincoln added, "if it is Smith, I have no way of getting at it." Then he said, more seriously, that he had to be guided a great deal by an instinctive impression of the visitor as he came in the door.

"Seldom a person sits down at this table, or desk, but I have formed an opinion of the man's disposition and traits, by an instinctive impression."

He acknowledged that he could not always trust to this, but was generally guided by it and found he got along very well with it. Sometimes, however, he did make a mistake, as when on one occasion he had talked to a man for half an hour as though he was a hotel keeper, and found out afterward that he was a preacher.

Through all this conversation there had run an undercurrent of whimsicality, partly, no doubt, the conscious effort of

a sorely tried mind to gain a few minutes' respite from its pressing cares, but none the less showing a keen and deep-seated appreciation of the funny side of life. Only once did this humor forsake him, and that was when Lincoln spoke of Tad. The little boy had been playing quietly by himself all the time—apparently he was as much at home in the Cabinet Room as in any other part of the White House—and Lincoln told me Tad had been sick and that it worried him.

Then he put his head in both his hands, looked down at the table, and said, "No man ought to wish to be President of the United States!"

Still holding his head in his hands, he said to me, "Young man, do not take a political office unless you are compelled to; there are times when it is heart-crushing!"

He said he had thought how many a mother and father had lost their children in the war—just boys.

"And I am so anxious about my Tad,

I cannot help but think how they must feel. If Tad had died—"

He grew very sad; for a few minutes his face was gloomy, and it seemed as though half a sob was coming up in his throat.

Lincoln was not one of those men who go to the extremes of grief or the extremes of joy; but other people have told me, as I myself now saw, that when there came to him that seizure of deep sadness he had to fight himself for a few minutes to overcome it. This impressed me that day very deeply. Breaking off abruptly from what he had been talking about—war and Artemus Ward—and speaking suddenly of Tad, he had dropped down in that dejected position, and for a few minutes looked so sad I thought something awful must suddenly have come to his mind. But it seemed, after all, to be only the fear that Tad, who was not very well, might die. Who can say what vistas of thought that idea may have opened.

## Chapter V: What Made Him Laugh

TO many persons it seemed incongruous that there should be any thought, motive, or taste in common between Abraham Lincoln and the droll Artemus Ward. Indeed, the great biographers of Lincoln have either ignored the existence of Ward or have referred to him very sparingly. Yet no visitor at the White House seemed more welcome than Ward during Lincoln's administration. Mr. Seward, the Secretary of State, and Mr. Stanton, the Secretary of War, were said to disapprove of Ward's frequent visits, and it was whispered to Mrs. Ames, correspondent of the *Independent*, that Lincoln hinted to Ward that it might be best to time his visits so as to occur when Mrs. Lincoln was not at home. But it was a matter of common gossip in "News-

paper Row" that there was a strong and true friendship between the care-burdened President and the fun-making showman, whose real name was Charles Farrar Browne.

The strange contrast in their abilities, their dispositions, and their careers puzzled the amateur psychoanalysts of that day. Was it merely an example of the attraction of opposites? Lincoln was strong, athletic, and enduring; Ward was weak, lazy, and changeable. Lincoln loved work; Ward took the path of least resistance. Lincoln was a moderate eater and lived firmly up to his principles as a teetotaler; Ward drank anything sold at a bar and sometimes was too intoxicated to appear at his "wax-figger show." Lincoln loved the classics and was a good judge of literature; Ward seldom read a classic translation. Lincoln saved money and could carefully invest it; Ward would not take the trouble to collect his own salary, and never was known to make an invest-

ment. Lincoln laughed often, and on rare occasions laughed long and loud; Ward never laughed in public and in his funniest moods never even smiled. Lincoln's sad face, when in repose, touched a chord of sympathy in the souls of those who knew him best. Yet Hingston, who was Ward's best friend, said that Ward's cold stare awoke at once cyclones of riotous laughter in his audiences. Lincoln was a great patriotic leader of men and wielded the power of a monarch; Ward was a quiet citizen, who loved his country, but had no desire for power or for battles. Strong contrasts these. Yet in a deep and sincere friendship they were agreed.

Of the few cheerful things which entered Lincoln's life in those troubled and gloomy times, the one which he enjoyed most was Ward's "Show." He thought this was the most downright comical thing that had ever been put before the public, and he laughed heartily even as he described it. Ward had a nondescript collection of

stuffed animals which he exhibited upon the stage; he told the audience he found it cheaper to stuff the animals once than to keep stuffing them continually. They consisted at one time of a jack-rabbit and two mangy bears. He had also a picture of the Western plains—the poorest one he could find. He would say, "The Indians in this picture have not come along yet."

One always expected him to lecture about his animals, but he never did; in fact, he scarcely mentioned them. His manner was that of an utter idiot, and his blank stare, when the audience laughed at something he had said, was enough in itself to send the whole hall into paroxysms of mirth. Lincoln said to me that day, "One glimpse of Ward would make a culprit laugh when he was being hung."

No doubt one reason why Lincoln felt kindly toward Ward was because the latter was "most unselfishly trying to keep people cheerful in a most depressing time. He and Nasby," the President said, "are fur-

nishing about all the cheerfulness we now have in this country." (Petroleum V. Nasby, it will be remembered, was the pen name taken by David Ross Locke in his witty letters from the "Confedrit Cross-roads."

The humor of Ward may seem crude to us now, but in the dark days of '64 it took something more potent than refined wit to make people laugh—just as it took a series of ludicrous and not overrefined drawings to make England laugh in 1916; and it must be borne in mind that while Ward's sayings were homely and sometimes savored strongly of the frontier, they were never coarse or insinuating.

But after all, the best way to learn what Lincoln really thought of Ward was to ask him, and I did exactly that. Also, I was careful to give close heed to his words, that I might be able to write them down immediately afterward. This, to the best of my recollection, was what Lincoln said:

"I was told the other day by a Congress-

man from Maine that Ward was driven partly insane in his early life by the drowning of his intended bride in Norway Lake. I could feel *that* in Ward's character somehow before I was told about it. Ward seems at times so utterly forlorn.

"Nothing draws on my feelings like such a calamity. I knew what it was once. Yes! Yes! I know all about it. One never gets away from it. I must ask Ward to tell me all about his trouble sometime. I think that is what makes him so sad in appearances. Ward never laughs himself, unless he thinks it is his duty to make other people laugh. He is surely right about that.

"Perhaps Ward's whisky drinking is all an attempt to drown his sorrow. Who knows? It is a mighty mistake to go to drink for comfort. I should suppose the memory of the woman, if she was one worth while, would keep him from such a foolish habit. I've been right glad that I let the stuff alone. There was plenty of it about.

"Ward told me one day that he took to funny work as a makeshift for a decent living; and that he found it to be an honest way to go about doing good. I would have done that myself if I had not found harder work at the law.

"I have agreed with many people who think that Ward should be in some trade or writing books. But I don't know about it. He has a special kind of mind, and, rightly used, he would make an excellent teacher of mental science. In one way of looking at it his life is wasted. But if he refreshes and cheers other people as he does me, I can't see how he could make a better investment of his life. I smile and smile here as one by one the crowd passes me to shake hands, until it is a week before my face gets straight. But it is a duty. *I could defeat our whole army to-morrow by looking glum at a reception or by refusing to smile for three consecutive hours.*[1] Ward says he carries a bottle of sunshine in 'the

[1] The italics are the author's.—Ed.

other pocket,' to treat his friends. I like that idea.

"Ward is dreadfully misunderstood by a lot of dull people. They insist on taking him seriously. An old lady in Baltimore held me up one night after I had told some of Artemus Ward's remarks, and she may not have forgiven me yet. I told his tale of the rich land out in Iowa, where the farmer threw a cucumber seed as far as he could and started out on a run for his house. But the cucumber vine overtook him and he found a seed cucumber in his pocket.

"At that the old lady opened her eyes and mouth, but made no remark. Once more I tried her, by telling how Ward knew a lady who went for a porous plaster and the druggist told her to place it anywhere on her trunk. Not having a trunk or box in the house, she put it on her bandbox, and the next day reported that it was so powerful that it drew her pink bonnet all out of shape.

"That was more than the conscientious old saint could stand, and after supper she called me aside and told me that I ought to know that man Ward, or whoever it was, 'was an out-and-out liar.'

"That makes me think of a colored preacher who worked here on the grounds through the week, and who loved the deep waters of theology in which he floundered daily. One evening I asked him why he did not laugh on Sunday, and when he said it was because it was 'suthin' frivlus,' I told him that the Bible said God laughed.

"The old man came to the door several days after that and said, 'Marse Linkum, I've been totin' dat yar Bible saying "God larfed," and I've 'cluded dat it mus' jes' tak' a joke as big as der universe ter mak God larf. Dar ain't no sech jokes roun' dis yere White House on Sunday.'

"Well, let us get back to Ward and begin *de novo*. And, by the way, that was the first Latin phrase I ever heard. But I like

Ward, because all his fun and all his yarns are as clean as spring water. He doesn't insinuate or suggest approval of evil. He doesn't ridicule true religion. He never speaks slightingly or grossly of woman. He is a one-hundred-carat man in his motives. I am often accredited with telling disgraceful barroom stories, and sometimes see them in print, but I have no time to contradict them. Perhaps people forget them soon. I hope so. I don't know how I came by the name of a story-teller. It is not a fame I would seek. But I have tried to use as many as I could find that were good so as to cheer up people in this hard world.

"Ward said that he did not know much about education in the schools, but he had an idea the training there was more to make the child think quickly and think accurately than to memorize facts. If that were the case he thought a textbook on bright jokes would be a valuable addition to a school curriculum.

"Ward's sharp jokes *do* discipline the mind. Ward told Tad last summer that Adam was *snaked* out of Eden, and that Goliath was surprised when David hit him because such a thing never entered his head before. Ward told Mr. Chase that his father was an artist who was true to life, for he made a scarecrow so bad that the crows brought back the corn they had stolen two years before. Ward believes that the riddles of Sampson, the fables of Æsop, the questions of Socrates, and sums in mathematics are all mind awakeners similar in effect to the discipline of real humor."

Knowing that Lincoln had suffered a nearly fatal heart blow in his youth through the tragic death of his first love, I was interested, years after this interview with the President, to learn that there had been a startling occurrence of a very similar nature in the early life of Ward. This has been almost universally overlooked. Even his most intimate friends, includ-

ing Robertson, Hingston, Setchell, Coe, Carleton, and Rider, make no mention of the tragic death of one of Ward's earliest girl friends, Maude Myrick, then residing with relatives in Norway, Maine. The township of Norway adjoins Waterford, where Ward was born, and where he lived until he was nineteen. None of Ward's biographers give details of his early life on the farm, and none appear even to have heard of Maude Myrick.

In 1874 a reporter of the Boston *Daily Traveler* was sent to Waterford to find the living neighbors of Ward's family and write a sketch of the village and people. In the report the barest mention was made of Maude Myrick. It stated that a cousin of Ward's remembered that his early infatuation for a girl in the adjoining township "broke him all up" when she was accidentally drowned at the inlet of Norway Lake. Search for her genealogy at this late date seems vain. Ward appears never to have mentioned her name but once

after her death, and that was on his own dying bed. The only allusion possibly concerning her that he ever made was a brief note in an autograph album, preserved in Portland, Maine, in which he wrote: "As for opposites; the happiest place for me is Tiffin, and the saddest is a bridge over the Norway brook."

If the historian could be sure that the vague rumor was fact and that the country lass and the farmer's son were lovers, that the place of her sudden death at the bridge over the inlet to Norway Lake, halfway between their homes, was their trysting place, it would make clear the chief reason for Abraham Lincoln's tender interest in Artemus Ward. That fact would also account in a large degree for Ward's eccentric, inimitable humor. All the great humorists from Charles Lamb to Josh Billings were broken-hearted in their youth. Great geniuses have often been developed by the same sad experience. It often costs much to be truly great.

Previous to his sixteenth year the life of Charles Farrar Browne was that of a New England country boy with parents who were industrious, honest, and poor. The family needs were not of the extreme kind which are found in the slums of the city, but existence depended on incessant toil and the most critical economy. Squire Browne, the father of the future "Artemus Ward," was a farmer who could also use surveying instruments with the skill of New England common sense.

His mother was a strong, industrious woman of the Pilgrim Fathers stock. She encouraged home study and made the long winter evenings the occasion for moral and mental instruction. The district school was of little use to her children, as they could "outteach the teacher." But Charlie was educated beyond his years by the books which his parents brought into the home. At fifteen years of age, his father having died two years previously, he was sent to Skowhegan, Maine, to learn the

trade of a printer in the office of the Skowhegan *Clarion*.

His parents had not intended that he should be permanently a printer; the inability to care for the growing boy at home evidently induced them to seek a trade for him by which he could earn a living while studying for the ministry. But the tragic events or the unaccountable mental revolution of those unrecorded years turned away all the hopes of his parents and sent his soul into rebellion against such a career. Nevertheless, a deep good nature remained intact and the altruistic qualities of his disposition proved to be permanent. He wrote to Shillabar ("Mrs. Partington") of Boston that "the man who has no care for fun himself has more time to cheer up his neighbors." The only thing that ever cheered Ward into chuckling laughter was to meditate by himself on the effect of a squib or description he was composing on "some old codger on a barrel by the country grocery."

Ward was never contented or fully happy. He traveled about from place to place, often leaving without collecting his wages. He was a typesetter and reporter at Tiffin, Ohio, at Toledo, and at Cleveland. When Mr. J. W. Gray of the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* secured Ward's services as a reporter, Ward was twenty-four years old and thought to be hopelessly indolent by his previous employer. He soon became known as "that fool who writes for the *Plain Dealer*"; and his comic situations and surprising arguments were soon the general theme of conversation in the city. He was famous in a month.

It was there and then that he assumed the pen name of Artemus Ward. He began to give his humorous public talks in 1862 and was successful from the first evening. His writings for *Vanity Fair*, New York, and all his lectures were clearly original. He could never be accused of plagiarism or imitation. Indeed, no one on earth could repeat his lectures with success or

equal Ward in continual fun making. He often assumed the role of an idiot, but at the same time made the wisest observations and the cutest sarcasms. His appearance on the stage even before he made his mechanical nod was greeted with loud, hearty, and prolonged laughter. The saddest forgot his sorrow, the most sedate gentleman began to shake, and the crusty old maid broke out into the Ha! Ha! of a girl of sixteen.

We may read Ward's writings and feel something of his absurd humor when we recall his posture as he stated solemnly that his wife's feet "were so large that her toes came around the corner two minutes before she came along"; but to feel the full force of the absurdity one needs to see Ward's seeming impatience that anyone should take it as a joke or disbelieve his plain statement.

Some cynical persons saw in Lincoln's friendship a move to secure Ward's influence as a popular writer for the help of

his political party. Now that Mr. Lincoln is more fully understood, no one would accuse him of any such a hypocritical or unworthy motive. He would have been frank with Ward even though the latter was needed to aid the sacred cause of human liberty.

Samuel Bowles of the Springfield *Republican*, writing on Artemus Ward's death in 1866, said, "Ward is said not to have seen a well day after the death of President Lincoln." It was a true friendship, beyond a doubt.

## Chapter VI: Humor in the Political Situation

AMONG the articles published by Artemus Ward were the following references to Lincoln's political life, which greatly pleased Mr. Lincoln. He often showed the worn clippings to his intimate friends. They lose much of the keen wit of their composition by the changes which the years have wrought in their local setting. Almost every word had a humorous and wise inference or thrust which cannot be recognized by the modern reader. But they retain enough still to be wonderfully funny.

The tattered clippings are no more, of course, but I have gone back to Ward's book and give below the stories which so amused Lincoln.

### JOY IN THE HOUSE OF WARD

DEAR SIRS:

I take my pen in hand to inform you that I am in a state of great bliss, and trust these lines will find you injoyin the same blessins. I'm reguvinated. I've found the immortal waters of yooth, so to speak, and am as limber and frisky as a two-year-old steer, and in the futur them boys which sez to me "go up, old Bawld hed," will do so at the peril of their hazard, individooally. I'm very happy. My house is full of joy, and I have to git up nights and larf! Sumtimes I ax myself "is it not a dream?" & suthin withinto me sez "it air"; but when I look at them sweet little critters and hear 'em squawk, I know it is a reality—2 realitys, I may say—and I feel gay.

I returnd from the Summer Campane with my unparaleld show of wax works and livin wild Beests of Pray in the early part of this munth. The peple of Baldinsville

met me cordully and I immejitly commenst restin myself with my famerly. The other nite while I was down to the tavurn tostin my shins agin the bar room fire & amuzin the krowd with sum of my adventurs, who shood cum in bare heded & terrible excited but Bill Stokes, who sez, sez he, "Old Ward, there's grate doins up to your house."

Sez I, "William, how so?"

Sez he, "Bust my gizzud but it's grate doins," & then he larfed as if he'd kill hisself.

Sez I, risin and puttin on a austeer look, "William, I woodunt be a fool if I had common cents."

But he kept on larfin till he was black in the face, when he fell over on to the bunk where the hostler sleeps, and in a still small voice sed, "Twins!" I ashure you gents that the grass didn't grow under my feet on my way home, & I was follered by a enthoosiastic throng of my feller sitterzens, who hurrard for Old Ward at the top of their voises. I found the house

chock full of peple. Thare was Mis Square Baxter and her three grown-up darters, lawyer Perkinses wife, Taberthy Ripley, young Eben Parsuns, Deakun Simmuns folks, the Skoolmaster, Doctor Jordin, etsetterry, etsetterry. Mis Ward was in the west room, which jines the kitchen. Mis Square Baxter was mixin suthin in a dipper before the kitchin fire, & a small army of female wimin were rushin wildly round the house with bottles of camfire, peaces of flannil, &c. I never seed such a hubbub in my natral born dase. I cood not stay in the west room only a minit, so strung up was my feelins, so I rusht out and ceased my dubbel barrild gun.

"What upon airth ales the man?" sez Taberthy Ripley. "Sakes alive, what air you doin?" & she grabd me by the coat tales. "What's the matter with you?" she continnerd.

"Twins, marm," sez I, "twins!"

"I know it," sez she, coverin her pretty face with her aprun.

"Wall," sez I, "that's what's the matter with me!"

"Wall, put down that air gun, you pesky old fool," sed she.

"No, marm," sez I, "this is a Nashunal day. The glory of this here day isn't confined to Baldinsville by a darn site. On yonder woodshed," sed I, drawin myself up to my full hite and speakin in a show actin voice, "will I fire a Nashunal saloot!" sayin whitch I tared myself from her grasp and rusht to the top of the shed whare I blazed away until Square Baxter's hired man and my son Artemus Juneyer cum and took me down by mane force.

On returnin to the Kitchin I found quite a lot of peple seated be4 the fire, a talkin the event over. They made room for me & I sot down. "Quite a eppisode," sed Docter Jordin, litin his pipe with a red-hot coal.

"Yes," sed I, "2 eppisodes, waying abowt 18 pounds jintly."

"A perfeck coop de tat," sed the skoolmaster.

"E pluribus unum, in proprietor persony," sed I, thinking I'd let him know I understood furrin langwidges as well as he did, if I wasn't a skoolmaster.

"It is indeed a momentious event," sed young Eben Parsuns, who has been 2 quarters to the Akademy.

"I never heard twins called by that name afore," sed I, "But I spose it's all rite."

"We shall soon have Wards enuff," sed the editer of the Baldinsville *Bugle of Liberty*, who was lookin over a bundle of exchange papers in the corner, "to apply to the legislater for a City Charter!"

"Good for you, old man!" sed I; "giv that air a conspickius place in the next *Bugle*."

"How redicklus," sed pretty Susan Fletcher, coverin her face with her knittin work & larfin like all possest.

"Wall, for my part," sed Jane Maria Peasley, who is the crossest old made in the world, "I think you all act like a pack of fools."

Sez I, "Mis. Peasly, air you a parent?"
Sez she, "No, I ain't."
Sez I, "Mis. Peasly, you never will be."
She left.

We sot there talkin & larfin until "the switchin hour of nite, when grave yards yawn & Josts troop 4th," as old Bill Shakespire aptlee obsarves in his dramy of John Sheppard, esq, or the Moral House Breaker, when we broke up & disbursed.

Muther & children is a doin well & as Resolushhuns is the order of the day I will feel obleeged if you'll insurt the follerin—

Whereas, two Eppisodes has happined up to the undersined's house, which is Twins; & Whereas I like this stile, sade twins bein of the male perswashun & both boys; there4 Be it—

*Resolved*, That to them nabers who did the fare thing by sade Eppisodes my hart felt thanks is doo.

*Resolved*, That I do most hartily thank Engine Ko. No. 17, who, under the im-

preshun from the fuss at my house on that auspishus nite that thare was a konflagration goin on, kum galyiantly to the spot, but kindly refraned from squirtin.

*Resolved*, That frum the Bottum of my Sole do I thank the Baldinsville brass band fur givin up the idea of Sarahnadin me, both on that great nite & sinse.

*Resolved*, That my thanks is doo several members of the Baldinsville meetin house who for 3 whole dase hain't kalled me a sinful skoffer or intreeted me to mend my wicked wase and jine sade meetin house to onct.

*Resolved*, That my Boozum teams with meny kind emoshuns towards the follerin individoouls, to whit namelee — Mis. Square Baxter, who Jenerusly refoozed to take a sent for a bottle of camfire; lawyer Perkinses wife who rit sum versis on the Eppisodes; the Editer of the Baldinsville *Bugle of Liberty*, who nobly assisted me in wollupin my Kangeroo, which sagashus little cuss seriusly disturbed the Eppisodes

by his outrajus screetchins & kickins up; Mis. Hirum Doolittle, who kindly furnisht sum cold vittles at a tryin time, when it wasunt konvenient to cook vittles at my hous; & the Peasleys, Parsunses & Watsunses fur there meny ax of kindness.

Trooly yures,

ARTEMUS WARD.

### THE CRISIS

[This Oration was delivered before the commencement of the war]

On returnin to my humsted in Baldinsville, Injianny, resuntly, my feller sitterzens extended a invite for me to norate to 'em on the Krysis. I excepted & on larst Toosday nite I peared be4 a C of upturned faces in the Red Skool House. I spoke nearly as follers:

Baldinsvillins: Heartto4, as I have numerously obsarved, I have abstrained from having any sentimunts or principles, my pollertics, like my religion, bein of a exceedin accommodatin character. But

the fack can't be no longer disgised that a Krysis is onto us, & I feel it's my dooty to accept your invite for one consecutive nite only. I spose the inflammertory individooals who assisted in projucing this Krysis know what good she will do, but I ain't 'shamed to state that I don't scacely. But the Krysis is hear. She's bin hear for sevral weeks, & Goodness nose how long she'll stay. But I venter to assert that she's rippin things. She's knockt trade into a cockt up hat and chaned Bizness of all kinds tighter nor I ever chaned any of my livin wild Beests. Alow me to hear dygress & stait that my Beests at presnt is as harmless as the newborn Babe. Ladys & gentlemen neen't hav no fears on that pint. To resoom—Altho I can't exactly see what good this Krysis can do, I can very quick say what the origernal cawz of her is. The origernal cawz is Our Afrikan Brother. I was into Barnim's Moozeum down to New York the other day & saw that exsentric Etheopian, the

What Is It. Sez I, "Mister What Is It, you folks air raisin thunder with this grate country. You're gettin to be ruther more numeris than interestin. It is a pity you coodent go orf sumwhares by yourselves, & be a nation of What Is Its, tho' if you'll excoose me, I shooden't care about marryin among you. No dowt you're exceedin charmin to hum, but your stile of luvliness isn't adapted to this cold climit." He larfed into my face, which rather Riled me, as I had been perfeckly virtoous and respectable in my observashuns. So sez I, turnin a leetle red in the face, I spect, "Do you hav the unblushin impoodents to say you folks haven't raised a big mess of thunder in this brite land, Mister What Is It?" He larfed agin, wusser nor be4, whareupon I up and sez, "Go home, Sir, to Afriky's burnin shores & taik all the other What Is Its along with you. Don't think we can spair your interestin picters. You What Is Its air on the pint of smashin up the gratest Guv'ment ever erected by man, &

you actooally hav the owdassity to larf about it. Go home, you low cuss!"

I was workt up to a high pitch, & I proceeded to a Restorator & cooled orf with some little fishes biled in ile—I b'leeve thay call 'em sardeens.

Feller Sitterzuns, the Afrikan may be Our Brother. Sevral hily respectyble gentlemen, and sum talentid females tell us so, & fur argyment's sake I mite be injooced to grant it, tho' I don't beleeve it myself. But the Afrikan isn't our sister & our wife & our uncle. He isn't sevral of our brothers & all our fust wife's relashuns. He isn't our grandfather, and our grate grandfather, and our Aunt in the country. Scacely. & yit numeris persons would have us think so. It's troo he runs Congress & sevral other public grosserys, but then he ain't everybody & everybody else likewise. [Notiss to bizness men of VANITY FAIR: Extry charg fur this larst remark. It's a goak.—A. W.]

But we've got the Afrikan, or ruther he's

got us, & now what air we going to do about it? He's a orful noosanse. Praps he isn't to blame fur it. Praps he was creatid fur sum wise purpuss, like the measles and New Englan Rum, but it's mity hard to see it. At any rate he's no good here, & as I statid to Mister What Is It, it's a pity he cooden't go orf sumwhares quietly by hisself, whare he cood wear red weskits & speckled neckties, & gratterfy his ambishun in varis interestin wase, without havin a eternal fuss kickt up about him.

Praps I'm bearing down too hard upon Cuffy. Cum to think on it, I am. He woodn't be sich a infernal noosanse if white peple would let him alone. He mite indeed be interestin. And now I think of it, why can't the white peple let him alone. What's the good of continnerly stirrin him up with a ten-foot pole? He isn't the sweetest kind of Perfoomery when in a natral stait.

Feller Sitterzens, the Union's in danger. The black devil Disunion is trooly here, starin us all squarely in the fase! We must

drive him back. Shall we make a 2nd Mexico of ourselves? Shall we sell our birthrite for a mess of potash? Shall one brother put the knife to the throat of anuther brother? Shall we mix our whisky with each other's blud? Shall the star spangled Banner be cut up into dishcloths? Standin here in this here Skoolhouse, upon my nativ shore so to speak, I anser—Nary!

Oh you fellers who air raisin this row, & who in the fust place startid it, I'm 'shamed of you. The Showman blushes for you, from his boots to the topmost hair upon his wenerable hed.

Feller Sitterzens: I am in the Sheer & Yeller leaf. I shall peg out 1 of these dase. But while I do stop here I shall stay in the Union. I know not what the supervizers of Baldinsville may conclude to do, but for one, I shall stand by the Stars & Stripes. Under no circumstances whatsomever will I sesesh. Let every Stait in the Union sesesh & let Palmetter flags flote thicker nor shirts on Square Baxter's close line,

still will I stick to the good old flag. The country may go to the devil, but I won't! And next Summer when I start out on my campane with my Show, wharever I pitch my little tent, you shall see floatin prowdly from the center pole thereof the Amerikan Flag, with nary a star wiped out, nary a stripe less, but the same old flag that has allers flotid thar! & the price of admishun will be the same it allers was—15 cents, children half price.

Feller Sitterzens, I am dun. Accordingly I squatted.

## WAX FIGURES *VERSUS* SHAKSPEARE

ONTO THE WING —— 1859.

MR. EDITOR.

I take my Pen in hand to inform yu that I'm in good helth and trust these few lines will find yu injoyin the same blessins. I wood also state that I'm now on the summir kampane. As the Poit sez—

ime erflote, ime erflote
On the Swift rollin tied
An the Rovir is free.

Bizness is scacely middlin, but Sirs I manige to pay for my foode and raiment puncktooally and without no grumblin. The barked arrers of slandur has bin leviled at the undersined moren onct sins heze bin into the show bizness, but I make bold to say no man on this footstule kan trooth-fully say I ever ronged him or eny of his folks. I'm travelin with a tent, which is better nor hirin hauls. My show konsists of a serious of wax works, snakes, a paner-amy kalled a Grand Movin Diarea of the War in the Crymear, komic songs and the Cangeroo, which larst little cuss continners to konduct hisself in the most outrajus stile. I started out with the idear of makin my show a grate Moral Entertainment, but I'm kompeled to sware so much at that air infurnal Kangeroo that I'm frade this desine will be flustratid to some extent. And while speakin of morrality, remines me that sum folks turn up their nosis at shows like mine, sayin they is low and not fit to be patrernized by peple of high de-

gree. Sirs, I manetane that this is infernal nonsense. I manetane that wax figgers is more elevatin than awl the plays ever wroten. Take Shakespeer for instunse. Peple think heze grate things, but I kontend heze quite the reverse to the kontrary. What sort of sense is thare to King Leer, who goze round cussin his darters, chawin hay and throin straw at folks, and larfin like a silly old koot and makin a ass of hisself ginerally? Thare's Mrs. Mackbeth—sheze a nise kind of woomon to have round ain't she, a puttin old Mack, her husband, up to slayin Dunkan with a cheeze knife, while heze payin a frendly visit to their house. O its hily morral, I spoze, when she larfs wildly and sez, "gin me the daggurs—Ile let his bowels out," or wurds to that effeck—I say, this is awl, strickly, propper, I spoze? That Jack Fawlstarf is likewise a immoral old cuss, take him how ye may, and Hamlick is as crazy as a loon. Thare's Richurd the Three, peple think heze grate things, but

I look upon him in the lite of a monkster. He kills everybody he takes a noshun to in kold blud, and then goze to sleep in his tent. Bimeby he wakes up and yells for a hoss so he kan go orf and kill sum more peple. If he isent a fit spesserman for the gallers then I shood like to know whare you find um. Thare's Iargo who is more ornery nor pizun. See how shameful he treated that hily respecterble injun gentlemun, Mister Otheller, makin him for to beleeve his wife was too thick with Casheo. Obsarve how Iargo got Casheo drunk as a biled owl on corn whiskey in order to karry out his sneckin desines. See how he wurks Mister Otheller's feelins up so that he goze and makes poor Desdemony swaller a piller which cawses her deth. But I must stop. At sum futur time I shall continner my remarks on the drammer in which I shall show the varst supeeriority of wax figgers and snakes over theater plays, in a interlectooal pint of view.

Very Respectively yures,

A Ward, T. K.

### THE SHAKERS

The Shakers is the strangest religious sex I ever met. I'd hearn tell of 'em and I'd seen 'em, with their broad brim'd hats and long wastid coats; but I'd never cum into immejit contack with 'em, and I'd sot 'em down as lackin intelleck, as I'd never seen 'em to my Show—leastways, if they cum they was disgised in white peple's close, so I didn't know 'em.

But in the Spring of 18—, I got swampt in the exterior of New York State, one dark and stormy night, when the winds Blue pityusly, and I was forced to tie up with the Shakers.

I was toilin threw the mud, when in the dim vister of the futer I obsarved the gleams of a taller candle. Tiein a hornet's nest to my off hoss's tail to kinder encourage him, I soon reached the place. I knockt at the door, which it was opened unto me by a tall, slick-faced, solum lookin individooal, who turn'd out to be a Elder.

"Mr. Shaker," sed I, "you see before you a Babe in the woods, so to speak, and he axes shelter of you."

"Yay," sed the Shaker, and he led the way into the house, another Shaker bein sent to put my hosses and waggin under kiver.

A solum female, lookin sumwhat like a last year's bean-pole stuck into a long meal bag, cum in and axed me was I a thurst and did I hunger? to which I urbanely anserd "a few." She went orf and I endeverd to open a conversashun with the old man.

"Elder, I spect?" sed I.

"Yay," he said.

"Helth's good, I reckon?"

"Yay."

"What's the wages of a Elder, when he understans his bisness—or do you devote your sarvices gratooitus?"

"Yay."

"Stormy night, sir."

"Yay."

"If the storm continners there'll be a mess underfoot, hay?"

"Yay."

"It's onpleasant when there's a mess underfoot?"

"Yay."

"If I may be so bold, kind sir, what's the price of that pecooler kind of weskit you wear, incloodin trimmins?"

"Yay!"

I pawsd a minit, and then, thinkin I'd be faseshus with him and see how that would go, I slapt him on the shoulder, bust into a harty larf, and told him that as a *yayer* he had no livin ekal.

He jumpt up as if Billin water had bin squirted into his ears, groaned, rolled his eyes up tords the sealin and sed: "You're a man of sin!" He then walkt out of the room.

Jest then the female in the meal bag stuck her hed into the room and statid that refreshments awaited the weary travler, and I sed if it was vittles she ment the

weary travler was agreeable, and I follored her into the next room.

I sot down to the table and the female in the meal bag pored out sum tea. She sed nothin, and for five minutes the only live thing in that room was a old wooden clock, which tickt in a subdood and bashful manner in the corner. This dethly stillness made me oneasy, and I determined to talk to the female or bust. So sez I, "marrige is agin your rules, I bleeve, marm?"

"Yay."

"The sexes liv strickly apart, I spect?"

"Yay."

"It's kinder singler," sez I, puttin on my most sweetest look and speakin in a winnin voice, "that so fair a made as thow never got hitched to some likely feller." [N. B.—She was upwards of 40 and homely as a stump fence, but I thawt I'd tickil her.]

"I don't like men!" she sed, very short.

"Wall, I dunno," sez I, "they're a raythor important part of the populashun.

I don't scacely see how we could git along without 'em."

"Us poor wimin folks would git along a grate deal better if there was no men!"

"You'll excoos me, marm, but I don't think that air would work. It wouldn't be regler."

"I'm fraid of men!" she sed.

"That's onnecessary, marm. *You* ain't in no danger. Don't fret yourself on that pint."

"Here we're shot out from the sinful world. Here all is peas. Here we air brothers and sisters. We don't marry and consekently we hav no domestic difficulties. Husbans don't abooze their wives —wives don't worrit their husbans. There's no children here to worrit us. Nothin to worrit us here. No wicked matrimony here. Would thow like to be a Shaker?"

"No," sez I, "it ain't my stile."

I had now histed in as big a load of pervishuns as I could carry comfortable, and,

leanin back in my cheer, commenst pickin my teeth with a fork. The female went out, leavin me all alone with the clock. I hadn't sot thar long before the Elder poked his hed in at the door. "You're a man of sin!" he sed, and groaned and went away.

Directly thar cum in two young Shakeresses, as putty and slick lookin gals as I ever met. It is troo they was drest in meal bags like the old one I'd met previsly, and their shiny, silky har was hid from sight by long white caps, sich as I spose female Josts wear; but their eyes sparkled like diminds, their cheeks was like roses, and they was charmin enuff to make a man throw stuns at his granmother if they axed him to. They comenst clearin away the dishes, castin shy glances at me all the time. I got excited. I forgot Betsy Jane in my rapter, and sez I, "my pretty dears, how air you?"

"We air well," they solumnly sed.

"Whar's the old man?" sed I, in a soft voice.

"Of whom dost thow speak—Brother Uriah?"

"I mean the gay and festiv cuss who calls me a man of sin. Shouldn't wonder if his name was Uriah."

"He has retired."

"Wall, my pretty dears," sez I, "let's have sum fun. Let's play puss in the corner. What say?"

"Air you a Shaker, sir?" they axed.

"Wall, my pretty dears, I haven't arrayed my proud form in a long weskit yit, but if they was all like you perhaps I'd jine 'em. As it is, I'm a Shaker protemporary."

They was full of fun. I seed that at fust, only they was a leetle skeery. I tawt 'em Puss in the corner and sich like plase, and we had a nice time, keepin quiet of course so the old man shouldn't hear. When we broke up, sez I, "my pretty dears, ear I go you hav no objections, hav you, to a innersent kiss at partin?"

"Yay," they sed, and I *yay'd*.

I went up stairs to bed. I spose I'd bin snoozin half an hour when I was woke up by a noise at the door. I sot up in bed, leanin on my elbers and rubbin my eyes, and I saw the follerin picter: The Elder stood in the doorway, with a taller candle in his hand. He hadn't no wearin appeerel on except his night close, which flutterd in the breeze like a Seseshun flag. He sed, "You're a man of sin!" then groaned and went away.

I went to sleep agin, and drempt of runnin orf with the pretty little Shakeresses mounted on my Californy Bar. I thawt the Bar insisted on steerin strate for my dooryard in Baldinsville and that Betsy Jane cum out and giv us a warm recepshun with a panfull of Bilin water. I was woke up arly by the Elder. He sed refreshments was reddy for me down stairs. Then sayin I was a man of sin, he went groanin away.

As I was goin threw the entry to the room where the vittles was, I cum across

the Elder and the old female I'd met the night before, and what d'ye spose they was up to? Huggin and kissin like young lovers in their gushingist state. Sez I, "my Shaker frends, I reckon you'd better suspend the rules and git married."

"You must excoos Brother Uriah," sed the female; "he's subjeck to fits and hain't got no command over hisself when he's into 'em."

"Sartinly," sez I, "I've bin took that way myself frequent."

"You're a man of sin!" sed the Elder.

Arter breakfust my little Shaker frends cum in agin to clear away the dishes.

"My pretty dears," sez I, "shall we *yay* agin? "

"Nay," they sed, and I *nay'd*.

The Shakers axed me to go to their meetin, as they was to hav sarvices that mornin, so I put on a clean biled rag and went. The meetin house was as neat as a pin. The floor was white as chalk and smooth as glass. The Shakers was all on

hand, in clean weskits and meal bags, ranged on the floor like milingtery companies, the mails on one side of the room and the females on tother. They commenst clappin their hands and singin and dancin. They danced kinder slow at fust, but as they got warmed up they shaved it down very brisk, I tell you. Elder Uriah, in particler, exhiberted a right smart chance of spryness in his legs, considerin his time of life, and as he cum a dubble shuffle near where I sot, I rewarded him with a approvin smile and sed: "Hunky boy! Go it, my gay and festiv cuss!"

"You're a man of sin!" he sed, continnerin his shuffle.

The Sperret, as they called it, then moved a short fat Shaker to say a few remarks. He sed they was Shakers and all was ekal. They was the purest and Seleckest peple on the yearth. Other peple was sinful as they could be, but Shakers was all right. Shakers was all goin kerslap to the Promist Land. and nobody

want goin to stand at the gate to bar 'em out, if they did they'd git run over.

The Shakers then danced and sung agin, and arter they was threw, one of 'em axed me what I thawt of it.

Sez I, "What duz it siggerfy?"

"What?" sez he.

"Why this jumpin up and singin? This long weskit bizniss, and this anty-matrimony idee? My frends, you air neat and tidy. Your hands is flowin with milk and honey. Your brooms is fine, and your apple sass is honest. When a man buys a keg of apple sass of you he don't find a grate many shavins under a few layers of sass—a little Game I'm sorry to say sum of my New Englan ancesters used to practiss. Your garding seeds is fine, and if I should sow 'em on the rock of Gibralter probly I should raise a good mess of garding sass. You air honest in your dealins. You air quiet and don't distarb nobody. For all this I givs you credit. But your religion is small pertaters, I must say.

You mope away your lives here in single retchidness, and as you air all by yourselves nothing ever conflicks with your pecooler idees, except when Human Nater busts out among you, as I understan she sumtimes do. [I giv Uriah a sly wink here, which made the old feller squirm like a speared Eel.] You wear long weskits and long faces, and lead a gloomy life indeed. No children's prattle is ever hearn around your harthstuns—you air in a dreary fog all the time, and you treat the jolly sunshine of life as tho' it was a thief, drivin it from your doors by them weskits, and meal bags, and pecooler noshuns of yourn. The gals among you, sum of which air as slick pieces of caliker as I ever sot eyes on, air syin to place their heds agin weskits which kiver honest, manly harts, while you old heds fool yerselves with the idee that they air fulfillin their mishun here, and air contented. Here you air all pend up by yerselves, talkin about the sins of a world you don't know nothin of. Mean-

while said world continners to resolve round on her own axeltree onct in every 24 hours, subjeck to the Constitution of the United States, and is a very plesant place of residence. It's a unnatral, onreasonable and dismal life you're leadin here. So it strikes me. My Shaker frends, I now bid you a welcome adoo. You have treated me exceedin well. Thank you kindly, one and all.

"A base exhibiter of depraved monkeys and onprincipled wax works!" sed Uriah.

"Hello, Uriah," sez I, "I'd most forgot you. Wall, look out for them fits of yourn, and don't catch cold and die in the flour of your youth and beauty."

And I resoomed my jerney.

### HIGH-HANDED OUTRAGE AT UTICA

In the Faul of 1856, I showed my show in Utiky, a trooly grate sitty in the State of New York.

The people gave me a cordyal recepshun. The press was loud in her prases.

1 day as I was givin a descripshun of my Beests and Snaiks in my usual flowry stile what was my skorn disgust to see a big burly feller walk up to the cage containin my wax figgers of the Lord's Last Supper, and cease Judas Iscarrot by the feet and drag him out on the ground. He then commenced fur to pound him as hard as he cood.

"What under the son are you abowt?" cried I.

Sez he, "What did you bring this pussy-lanermus cuss here fur?" and he hit the wax figger another tremenjis blow on the hed.

Sez I, "You egrejus ass, that air's a wax figger—a representashun of the false 'Postle."

Sez he, "That's all very well for you to say, but I tell you, old man, that Judas Iscarrot can't show hisself in Utiky with impunerty by a darn site!" with which

observashun he kaved in Judassis hed. The young man belonged to 1 of the first famerlies in Utiky. I sood him, and the Joory brawt in a verdick of Arson in the 3d degree.

## Chapter VII: Why Lincoln Loved Laughter

ONLY once in the course of our long and rambling conversation did Lincoln refer to the war. That was when he asked me how the soldiers' spirits were keeping up. He said he had been giving out so much cheer to the generals and Congressmen that he had pumped himself dry and must take in a new supply from some source at once. He declared that his "ear bones ached" to hear a good peal of honest laughter. It was difficult, he said, to laugh in any acceptable manner when soldiers were dying and widows weeping, but he must laugh soon even if he had to go down cellar to do it. He asked me if I had thought how sacred a thing was a loving smile, and how important it often was to laugh. Then he told

how some Union officers in reconnoitering had heard the Confederates laughing loudly over a game, and returned cast down with fear of some sudden and successful attack by the cheerful enemy. That laughter actually postponed a great battle for which the Union soldiers had been prepared.

When, as I later ascertained, I had been with the President for almost two hours, he suddenly straightened up in his chair, remarked that he "felt much better now," and with a friendly but firm, "Good morning," turned back to the papers before him on the table. This sounds abrupt as it is told, but there was a homeliness and simplicity about everything Lincoln did which robbed the action of any suspicion of discourtesy. One does not shake hands with a member of his own family on merely quitting a room, and I felt that a ceremonious dismissal would have been equally uncalled for in this case. Perhaps I really should say that is the way I feel now; at

the time I did not think of the matter at all because what was done seemed perfectly natural and proper.

In the anteroom the crowd was greater, if anything, than when I had gone in. Among those callers there were certain to be some who would bring trouble and vexation aplenty to the President. It was in preparation for this that he had been resting himself, like a boxer between the rounds of a bout. One would make a great error by supposing that Lincoln's normal manner was that which he had exhibited to me. He could be soft and tender-hearted as any woman, but within that kindly nature there lay gigantic strength and the capacity for the most decisive action. He could speak slowly and weigh his words when occasion demanded, but his usual manner was vigorous and prompt—so much so that at times his speech had a quality which might fairly be described as explosive.

This was because he always knew

exactly what he wanted to say. He thought out each problem to the end and decided it; then he left that and did not trouble his mind about it any more, but took up something else. This habit of disciplined thinking gave him a great advantage over most people, who mix their thinking and try to carry on a dozen mental processes all at once.

Lincoln realized the importance of mental discipline and he gave to humor a high place as an aid to its attainment. I have already told how, in discussing Artemus Ward with me, he said Ward was really an educator, for he understood that the purpose of education was to discipline the mind, to enable a man to think quickly and accurately in all circumstances of life. I hope the reader will bear with me if I repeat some of the points which Lincoln made then, because they show so clearly why he valued humor. Lincoln said that much of Ward's humor was of the educational sort. It aroused intellectual activ-

ity of the finest kind, and he mentioned Ward's constant use of riddles as an illustration. Then he spoke of the ancient Samson riddle and the fables of Æsop, and called attention to the fact that they employed a joke to train the mind by the study of keen satire. He said Ward was like that. It seems that Tad came to Ward at the table one day after he had heard somewhere a joke about Adam in Eden. So he said to Mr. Ward, "How did Adam get out of Eden?"

Ward had never heard the conundrum and did not give the answer Tad expected, but he had one of his own, for he exclaimed "Adam was 'snaked' out." It took Tad some little time to fathom this reply and gave him some splendid mental exercise. Mr. Lincoln said he did not see why they did not have a course of humor in the schools. It was characteristic of his great modesty that whenever he referred to school or to college Lincoln always tried to limit himself by saying that, as he did

not know what they did learn there, he was not an authority on the subject, but that such-and-such a thing was just "his notion."

If discipline was a subjective purpose in Lincoln's use of humor, it may be said with equal certainty that the illustrative power of a well-told story was the principal objective use to which he put it. Lincoln seems never to have told a story simply to relate it; everyone he told had an application aside from the story itself. There is something profoundly elemental about this; it is like the use of the parable in the teachings of Christ.

Astute minds, capable of grasping the meaning of facts without illustration, sometimes resented this habit of the President's; some of the sharpest criticism, as might be expected, came from within the Cabinet itself; but there can certainly be no just foundation for the statement that Lincoln detained a full session of the Cabinet to read them two chapters in

Artemus Ward's book. He was not frivolous or shallow. His reverence for great men, for great thoughts, and for great occasions was most sensitively acute. He recognized the fact that "brevity is the soul of wit," and would not have done more than use a condensed and brief reference to Ward, at most. We know that on another occasion he made most effective use at a Cabinet meeting of Ward's burlesque on Shaw patriotism when he quoted Ward as saying that he "was willing, if need be, to sacrifice all his wife's relations for his country."

An even better example of the President's use of humor is the following story which he once told to illustrate the military situation existing at the time. A bull was chasing a farmer around a tree. The farmer finally got hold of the bull's tail, and both started off across the field. The farmer could not let go for fear he would fall and break his head, but he called out to the bull, "Who started this mess, any-

way?" Lincoln said he had gotten hold of the bull by the tail and that while the Confederacy was running away he dared not let go. This summed up the situation in a way the whole country could understand.

It is an interesting fact, and one not generally known, that Lincoln committed almost every good story he heard to writing. If his old notebooks could be found they would make a wonderful volume, but, unfortunately, they have never come to light. Perhaps he felt ashamed of them, as he did of his rough draft of the Gettysburg address, which he had scribbled on the margin of a newspaper in the morning while riding to Gettysburg on the train.

There was one source of Lincoln's humor —and perhaps it was the chief one—which flowed from the very bedrock of his nature. That was the desire to bring cheer to others. When he was passing through the very Valley of the Shadow after the tragic

end of the single love affair of his youth a true friend told him that he had no right to look so glum—that it "was his solemn duty to be cheerful," to cheer up others. Young Abe took the lesson to heart, and he never forgot it. Incidentally, it was the means of restoring him to health and probably of preserving his sanity—as the old saint who gave him the lecture no doubt intended that it should.

In their common experience of an awful grief and in their ability to rise above its devastation purged of selfishness and devoted to a career of service, each according to his own gifts, Abraham Lincoln and Charles Farrar Browne had followed the same path, and it was from this that there sprang that deep and true bond of sympathy between the two men which mystified so many even of those who considered themselves Lincoln's intimates. Where another saw but the cap and bells, Lincoln saw and reverenced the tortured, struggling soul within.

During our memorable talk on that December day in 1864 when the cares of state were pressing so sorely upon him, the President told me that he was greatly relieved in times of personal distress by trying to cheer up somebody else. He spoke of it as being both selfish and unselfish. He said he had been accused of telling thousands of stories he had never heard of, but that he told stories to cheer the downhearted and tried to remember stories that were cheerful to relate to people in discouraged circumstances. He reminded me that his first practice of the law was among very poor people. He tried to tell stories to his clients who were discouraged, to give them courage, and he found the habit grew upon him until he had to "draw in" and decline to use so many stories.

Bob Burdett, writing for the Burlington *Hawkeye* shortly after the President's death on April 15, 1865, said that Abraham Lin-

coln's humorous anecdotes would soon die, but that Lincoln's humor, like John Brown's soul, would be ever "marching on." No printed story which he told ever expressed the soul of Lincoln fully. His own partial description of humor as "that indefinable, intangible grace of spirit," is not to be found exemplified in his published speeches. It is in the spirit which animated them rather than in the works themselves that we must look for the vital principle of Lincoln's humorous sayings.

To attempt the analysis of humor is as if a philosopher should try to put a glance of love into a geometrical diagram or the soul of music into a plaster cast. No one by searching can find it and no one by labor can secure it. Yet so simple, so homely, and withal so shrewd was the humor of Abraham Lincoln that one can easily picture him turning over in his mind the words of his favorite quotation from the "Merchant of Venice"—one of the few classical quotations he ever used—

while he reflected, half sadly, upon the cynicism and pettiness of mankind:

"Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time,
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes
And laugh like parrots at a bagpiper;
And others of such vinegar aspect
That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable."

## Chapter VIII: Lincoln and John Brown

"THIS is my friend!" said Lincoln, as he suddenly turned to a pile of books beside him and grasped a Japanese vase containing a large open pond lily. Some horticultural admirer, knowing Lincoln's love for that special flower, had sent in from his greenhouse a specimen of the *Castilia odorata.* The President put his left arm affectionately around the vase as he inclined his head to the lily and drew in the unequaled fragrance with a long, deep breath.

"I have never had the time to study flowers as I often wished to do," he said. "But for some strange reason I am captivated by the pond lily. It may be because some one told me that my mother admired them."

Sitting at this desk now, looking out on the Berkshire Hills and living over in memory that visit to the White House, I see again the tableau of the President looking down into the face of that glorious flower. He hugged the vase closer and repeated tenderly, "This is my friend!"

In reverie and in dreams I have meditated long, searching for some satisfactory reason why that particular bloom was Lincoln's dear friend. Yet the reason, whatever it may be, matters not so much as the fact. Lincoln loved the lily and called it his friend. No mere sensuous admiration of beauty, this, but a deep sense of its spiritual significance. By its perfection the lily achieved personality, and that personality, so simple, so pure, so exquisite, struck a responsive chord in the heart of this man whom his cultured contemporaries called uncouth! On the plane of the spirit they met as friends.

Great gifts have their price. From Lincoln's sensitive tenderness sprang the suf-

fering which he bore, both in his early life and during the living martyrdom of his years in the White House. But as if to offset somewhat this terrible burden was added the divine gift of humor.

It has been often remarked that humor and pathos are closely akin. The greatest humorists are also the greatest masters of pathos. Perhaps Mark Twain's greatest work was his *Joan of Arc*, which is almost wholly sad, a study in pathos, while *The Gilded Age* makes its readers weep and laugh by turns.

As in the expression so also in the source. When Lincoln with tender emphasis said to me that Artemus Ward's humor was largely "the result of a broken heart," he was but stating the law of nature that deep sorrow is as essential to humor as winter snows are to the bloom of spring. Charles Lamb's many griefs, and especially his sorrow over his insane sister, were the black soil from which his genius grew.

Many of Josh Billings's ludicrous say-

ings were misspelled through his tears. The traceable outlines of tragedies in the early lives of writers like Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Bob Burdette, and Nasby testify to the rule that a sad night somewhere precedes the dawn of pure wit and inspiring humor.

Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* said, "If there is a hell on earth, it is to be found in the melancholy man's heart." But James Whitcomb Riley said that "wit in luxuriant growth is ever the product of soil richly fertilized by sorrow." As for Lincoln, his first love died of a broken heart; he lived on with one.

"Cheer up, Abe! Cheer up!" was the hourly advice of the sympathetic pioneers among whom he lived. But the sorrowing stranger was, after all, friendless, and he could not cheer up alone. He was an orphan, homeless; he had no sister, no brother, no wife to soothe, advise, or caress him. The floods of sorrow had swallowed him up and he struggled alone. Few, in-

deed, are the men or women who have descended so deep and endured to remember it.

Down into the darkness came faint voices saying over and over, "Cheer up, Abe!" If he could muster the courage to do as they said, he would be saved from death or the insane asylum, which is more dreaded than the grave. Nothing but cheer could be of any use.

One dear old saint told him to remember that his sweetheart's soul was not dead, and that she, undoubtedly, wished him to complete his law studies and to make himself a strong, good man. "For her sake, go on with life and fill the years with good deeds!"

Years afterward he must have thought of that when, in the dark days of General McClelland's failures, he urged the soldiers to "cheer up and thus become invincible." Mr. Lincoln, in 1863, when speaking of his regard for the Bible, said that once he read the Bible half through carefully to find a

quotation which he saw first in a scrap of newspaper, which declared, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." That must have been done in those sad days when the darkness was still upon him.

How little has the world yet appreciated the important maxim given to those who seek success, "to smile and smile, and smile again." It is a very practical and a very useful direction. But it may be a hypocritical camouflage when it has no important reflex influence on the man himself.

The same idea was expressed with serious emphasis by Lincoln in 1858, when he urged the teachers of Keokuk, Iowa, to let the children laugh. He said that a hearty, natural laugh would cure many ills of mankind, whether those ills were physical, mental, or moral. The truth and usefulness of that statement it has taken science and religion more than a half century to accept. Now the study of good cheer is one of the major sciences. Some psychologists contend that laughter is one of the

greatest aids to digestion and is highly conducive to health; therefore, Hufeland, physician to the King of Prussia, commended the wisdom of the ancients, who maintained a jester who was always present at their meals and whose quips and cranks would keep the table in a roar.

It was an important declaration made by the humorous "Bob" Burdette, when he said that an old physician of Bellevue Hospital had assured him that a cheerful priest who visited the hospital daily "had cured more patients by his laughter than had any physician with his prescriptions." Burdette rated himself, in his uses of fun, as the "oiler-up of human machinery"; and good cheer and righteousness followed him closely, keeping ever within the sound of his voice. The life-giving, invigorating spirit of good cheer made Abraham Lincoln's great mind clearer and held him to his faith that right makes might, and that night is but the vestibule of morning.

If Lincoln was the founder, as many believe, of the "modern school of good cheer," he was a mighty benefactor of the human race. The idea of healing by suggestion, by hopeful influences, and by faith has given rise to many societies, schools, churches, and healers, all having for their basic principle the healthful stimulation of the weak body by the use of faith—that is to say, cheer. Innumerable cases of the prevention of insanity, and some cases of the complete restoration of hopeless lunatics, by laughter and fresh confidence are now known to the medical profession. One draught of deep, hearty laughter has been known to effect an immediate cure of such nervous disorders, especially neuralgia, hysteria, and insomnia. The doctor who smiles sincerely is two doctors in one. He heals through the body and he heals through the mind.

When this teaching is applied to the eradication of immorality or the defeat of religious errors we are reminded of Lin-

coln's remark that "the devil cannot bear a good joke." That martyr is not going to recant who, on his way to the scaffold, can smile as he pats the head of a child. The believer in the assertion that "all things work together for good to those who love God" can laugh at difficulties, and he will be heard and followed by a throng. Spurgeon said that "a good joke hurled at the devil and his angels is like a bursting bomb of Greek fire." Ridicule with laughter the hypocrite or evil schemer, and he will crouch at your feet or fly into self-destructive passion; but ridicule Abraham Lincoln and he lifts his clenched hand and smiles while he strikes. The cartoonist ever defeats the orator. People dance only under the impulse of cheerful music. These thoughts are recorded here because they were suggested by Abraham Lincoln and because they furnish a very satisfactory reason why Lincoln laughed.

The tales of Lincoln's droll stories and perpetual fun making before he was

twenty-four years old seem to have no trustworthy foundation. His use of humor as a duty and as a weapon in debate first appears distinctly about the year 1836, when he was admitted to the bar. He was almost unnoticed in the legislature until he secured sufficient confidence to use side-splitting jokes in the defeat of the opponents of righteousness. As paradoxical as it first may seem, joking, with Lincoln, was a serious matter. He had been saved by good cheer, and he was conscientiously determined to save others by the use of that same potent force.

It has been said that the humanizing effect of his homely humor was what gave Lincoln a place in the hearts of mankind such as few others have ever held. One man whom I knew intimately in my boyhood days was as devoted and as high minded, probably, as anyone who ever lived. He had a great influence upon the events of his day; some people regarded him as almost a saint—or at least a

prophet. Yet he never captured the heart of the people as Abraham Lincoln did, and to-day he is virtually forgotten. That man was John Brown.

When I had my long interview with President Lincoln in the winter of 1864 I told him that John Brown had been for a number of years in partnership with my father in the wool business at Springfield, Massachusetts, and that he was a frequent and intimate caller at our house. He and my father were closely associated in the antislavery movement and in the operation of the "underground railway" by which fugitive blacks were spirited across the line into Canada. The idea of a slave uprising in Virginia was discussed at our dinner table again and again for years before the Harper's Ferry raid finally took place; and it is altogether probable that my father would have shared Brown's martyrdom if my mother's persistent opposition had not defeated his natural inclination.

John Brown had a summer place in the

Adirondacks, and when he left there a man remained behind in the old cabin to help the slaves escape. This was not the route usually followed, however. Most of the fugitives came up from Virginia to Philadelphia, from Philadelphia to New York, New York to Hartford, and thence over the line into Canada. My father's branch of the "underground railway" ran from Springfield to Bellows Falls. It was a common thing for our woodshed to be filled with negroes whom my father would guide at the first opportunity to the next "station." This was very risky work; its alarms darkened my boyhood and filled our days with fears.

Lincoln was very much interested that day in what I told him about John Brown. He asked me many questions, but I soon saw that there was very little he did not know about the subject. Finally I told him that while my father shared John Brown's opinions, my mother thought he was a kind of monomaniac and frequently

said so. At this Lincoln laughed heartily, but he made no verbal comment.

Nobody could be more earnest or sincere than Lincoln, but he could laugh; John Brown could not. My earliest impression, as a little boy, of John Brown, was that he might be one of the old prophets; he made me think of Isaiah. He was tall and thin; he wore a long beard and was always very, very serious. He hardly ever told a joke. John Brown's part in the business partnership was to sell the wool which my father bought from the farmers in the surrounding territory. So Brown was the man in the office, with time and opportunity for study and planning, while my father was out in the open, dealing with other men. Until they became involved so deeply in the antislavery movement the wool business prospered; the fact was that my father trusted Brown's business judgment as being pretty good. But in the end they gave up everything in the way of business of any sort. My father was a

Methodist, but I do not remember hearing that John Brown belonged to any church. The liberation of the slaves obsessed his mind to the exclusion of all other thoughts and interests.

Brown used to drive over to our house two or three times a week. It was a thirty-mile drive from Springfield, so he had always to spend the night.

I have kept the latch of the door to his room—the room which he always occupied. How many times he raised that latch in passing in and out!

I was a little chap then and used often to sit on his knee and listen to his stories told in that solemn, deep voice, which lent a mysterious dignity to the most unimportant tale.

When evening came and dinner was over and the womenfolk were busy outside, Brown and my father would pull up their chairs to the dining table, on which a big lamp had been set, and talk long and earnestly—sometimes far into the night

—while they pored over maps and lists and memoranda. Often I would wake up, when it seemed that morning must be almost at hand, and hear John Brown's low, even-toned voice speaking words which were to me without meaning.

Next morning, after an early breakfast, he would harness his horse to the buggy, if one of us boys had not already done it for him, and start on the lonely drive back to Springfield.

Brown and my father had accurate knowledge of many facts which might contribute to the success of a slave uprising in Virginia. They knew how many plantations there were and how many negroes were owned in each county—also the number of whites. Brown knew the names of the owners of the plantations and the means of reaching the plantations by unfrequented ways. He had talked this over with my father for years. William Lloyd Garrison told him it was a very foolish enterprise that he contemplated, and was

opposed to it, although he was Brown's int mate friend.

It is a significant and a not generally known fact that John Brown actually believed his insurrection would succeed; but whether it would or not, he was determined sooner or later to make the attempt. He said, "If I die that way, I will do more good than by living on; and, anyhow, I will do it whether it succeeds or not."

The last time I saw John Brown was when he drove out to our house before leaving Springfield to go to Harper's Ferry. My father drove him down to the station —to Huntingdon railroad station; they called it Chester Village then, but the name has since been changed. The last letter that he wrote from the prison at Charleston was to my father. It was written the day before his execution.

John Brown's character was perfectly suited to the part he elected to play, and that this had a potent influence upon peo-

ple's minds and through them upon events leading up to the war cannot be denied. A less austere man or a man less firm in his own convictions would never have carried through such a mad exploit. But it is not a desecration of John Brown's memory to state the simple fact that he lacked the quality of human understanding which Lincoln possessed so richly and which showed itself in the smile of sympathy and the word of good cheer.

Before I left Washington to go back to my regiment I learned that the friend for whose life I had gone to plead had been pardoned by the President. The hearty greeting which hailed the return of that young soldier to his comrades was full of spontaneous joy, but in the background of the picture was the great form of Old Abe, the greatest saint in the calendar of all the soldiers.

He was indeed, as has been often said before, the best friend of the whole coun-

try—the South as well as the North. Through all of that bitter struggle he never forgot that he had been elected President of *all* the United States.

When I had a second long talk with Lincoln, just shortly before he was murdered, not one word did he say against the South or against the generals of the South. He spoke of General Lee always in respectful terms. He respected the Southern army and the Southern people, and he estimated them for just about what they were worth. He did not underestimate their power nor their patriotism; not a word in that two hours' interview did he say against the Southern army or the Southern people vindictively; it was that of a calm statesman who estimated them for what they were worth; and whenever he mentioned the name of General Lee he emphasized the fact that Lee was fighting that war on a high principle, not one of vindictiveness or any small ambition.

He realized that the Southern people

were fighting for what they believed was right, and he knew General Lee would not be in it unless he was convinced it was right. He did not say that in words, but that is the impression I received. To hear the stories of Southern barbarities which would naturally be circulated about the enemy and then to find the President of the United States treating the matter with such dignity and calmness was a surprise and an enlightenment to me.

On that black day when the body of Abraham Lincoln lay in state in the East Room of the White House it was my great privilege to be detailed for duty there. I happened to be in Washington, recovering from a wound sustained in the battle of Kenesaw Mountain a short time before, and I was called upon, together with all unattached officers in the Capitol, to help out. About twenty officers were continually on duty in the room in which the casket stood. Two of us actually stood guard at a time—one at the head and one

at the foot. The casket was heaped high with flowers and the people passed through the room in an unending stream.

No such grief was ever known on this continent. All wept, strong, hardened warriors with the rest. People were heartily ashamed when their supply of tears ran out. Some trembled as they passed through the door, and, once outside the room, gave vent to their sorrow in groans and shrieks, while others, in the excess of their grief, cursed God, as though Lincoln's death was an unjust punishment of him instead of a glorious crown of martyrdom.

Looking back through fifty-four years—after the calm judgment of sages has reasserted their wisdom and after all Lincoln's enemies have turned to devoted friends—we cannot forbear the renewed assertion that Abraham Lincoln was in some special way unlike other men. That unusual power of inspiration was exhibited in his words and acts almost every day of his closing years.

Through the half century there comes down to us a wonderful sentence in Lincoln's second inaugural address which is incarnate with vigorous life. Out of the smoke, devastation, hate, and death of a gigantic fratricidal war, above the contentions of parties, jealous commanders, and grief-benumbed mourners, clear and certain as a trumpet call this unlooked-for declaration rang out. It was the voice of God:

> With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the Nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

What a Christian spirit, what a deference to God, what a determined purpose for good! What a basis for peace among the nations was there stated in one single sentence! Where in the writings of the gifted geniuses, ancient or modern, is

another one so potent. Yet the mere dead words are not specially symmetrical, and the expression is in the language of the common people. The influence is that of the spirit; it can never die.

His enemies mourned when he died and and all the world said a great soul had departed. But the children of his dear heart and brain will live on the earth forever. They will pray and teach and sacrifice and fight on until all nations shall be the one human family which the prophet Lincoln so clearly foresaw. Men are called to special work. Men are more divine than material; and among the most trustworthy proofs of this intuitive truth is the continuing force of the personality of Abraham Lincoln.

THE END

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